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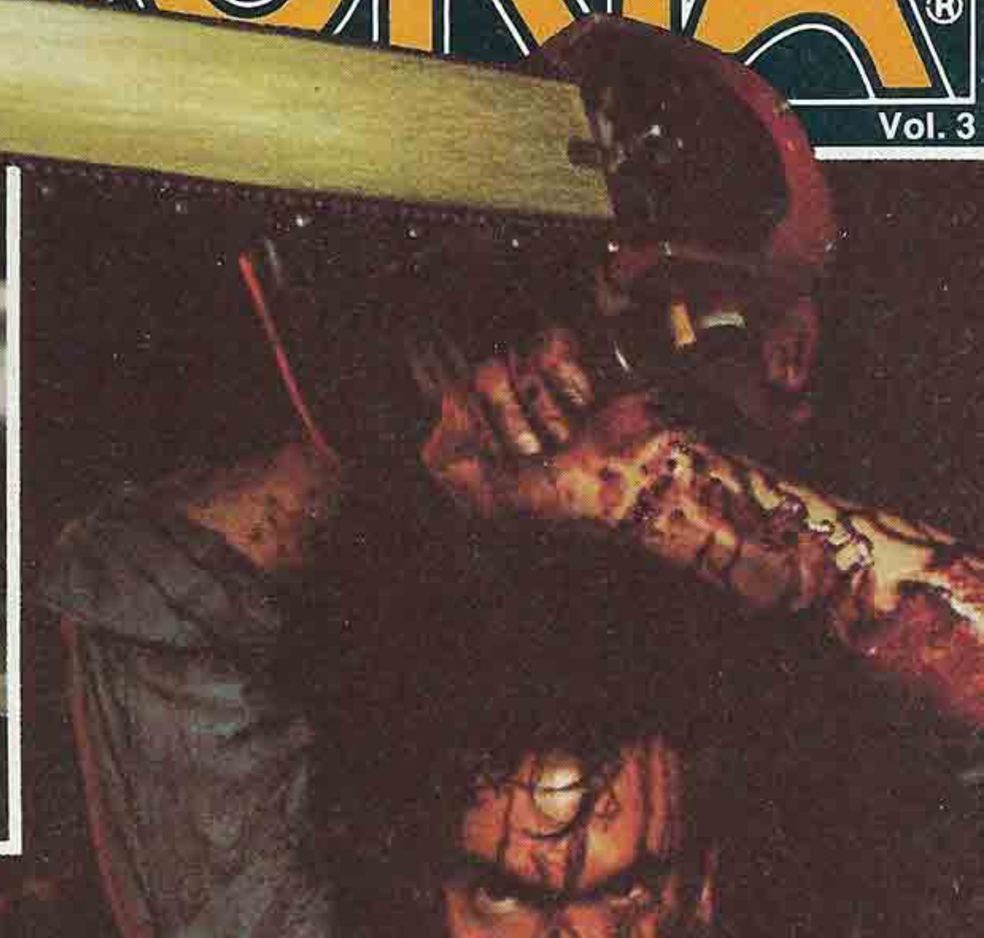

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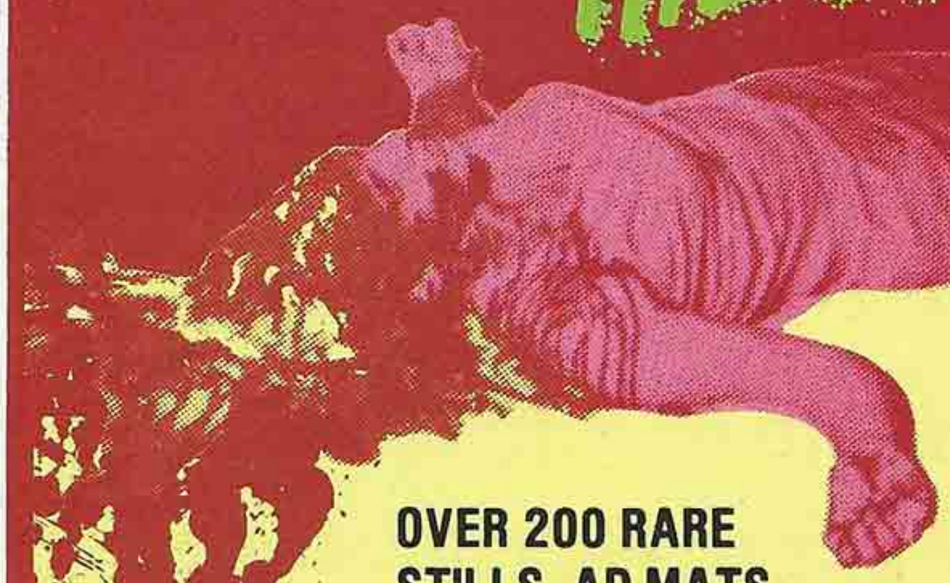

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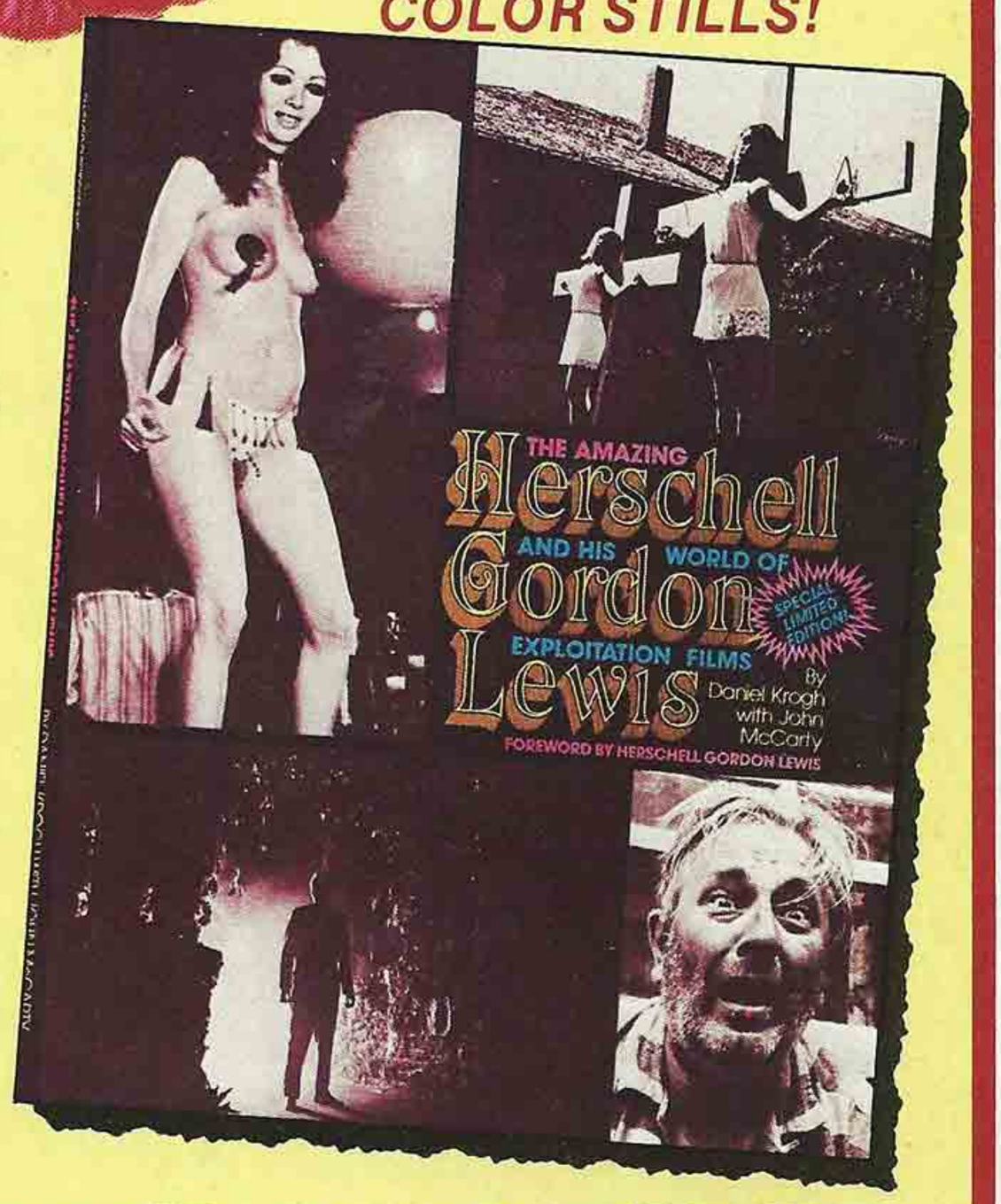

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CUJO

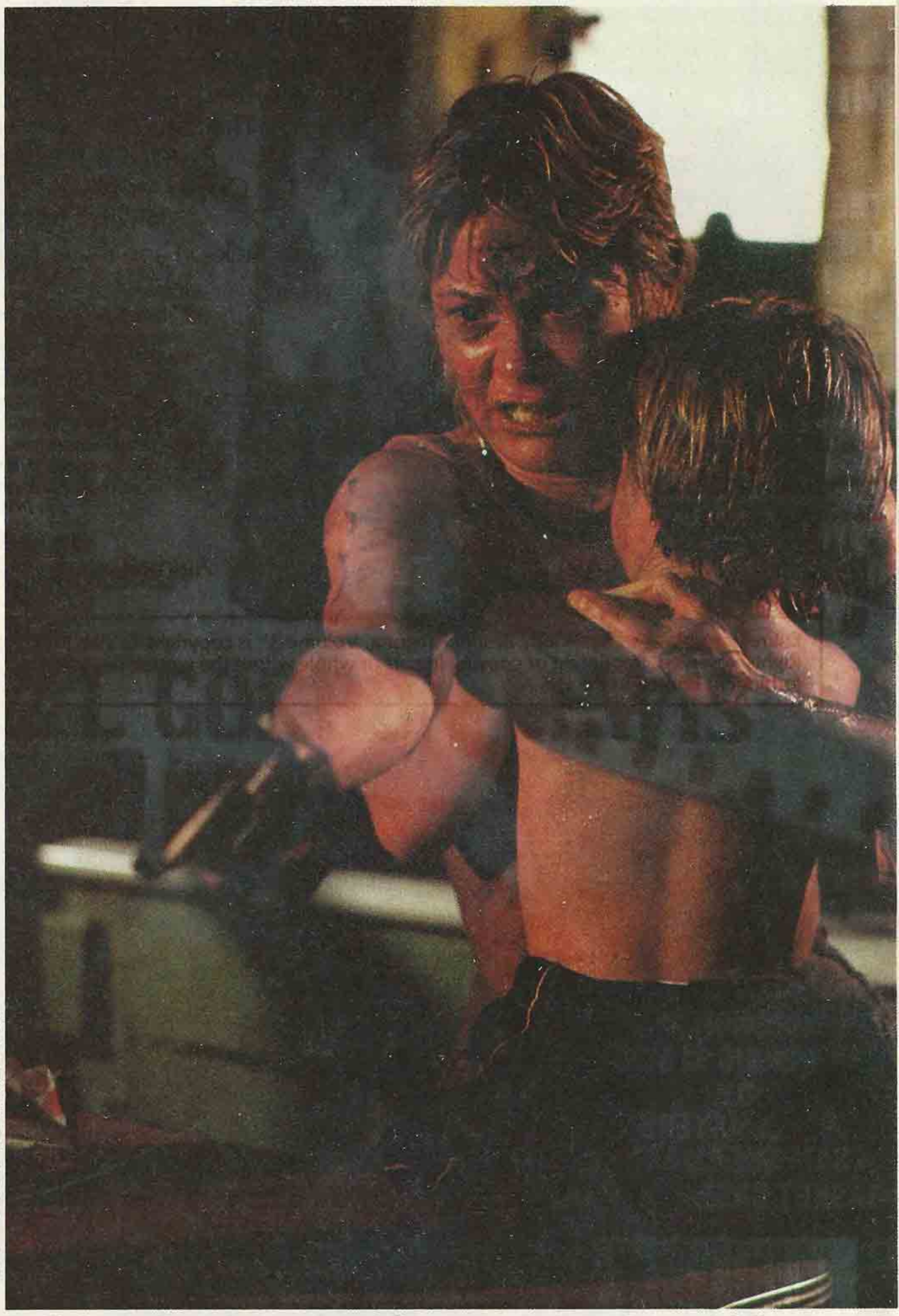
Lewis Teague, the Alligator *Director, Talks About Bringing Stephen King's Rabid Saint Bernard to the Screen.*

By David Everitt

When Lewis Teague was announced as the director of *Cujo*, horror and suspense fans who had been paying close attention to recent thrillers had good reason to have high hopes for this latest Stephen King adaptation. Three years ago, Teague collaborated with producer Brandon Chase and screenwriter John Sayles to make *Alligator*, a highly unique and engaging monster movie, a rare combination of laughs and thrills that could appeal to both devout horror fans and mainstream movie-goers. While *Cujo* is not the sort of property that calls for the same light-hearted approach found in *Alligator*, Teague's deft handling of characterization and suspense was a valuable asset in the filming of King's tense story of a family at the mercy of a huge rabid dog.

Since the 60's, Teague has had the opportunity to try his hand at many tasks in filmmaking. As he puts it, "I've worked in production, I've worked as a location manager, I've worked as an editor, I've done some camerawork—I've done all the odd jobs filmmakers do when they get out of film school." The school he graduated from was N.Y.U. where his classmates included Martin Scorsese and Brian DePalma. When he first enrolled in N.Y.U., he didn't take advantage of that school's film department. His first major was theater arts, then he moved on to English. He was fascinated by the original New Wave films from France that were being imported into this country at that time, films like *Breathless* and *400 Blows*; the experience turned his head around and steered him toward cameras and editing benches.

For several years Teague worked in documentaries. He was a production manager on *Woodstock* and made a documentary in India that eventually led to a staff position at KCT, a PBS station. But he wasn't content to pursue this line of work, even though it did pay the rent. "I felt I was getting sidetracked by making documentaries," Teague says. "I was very frustrated because I wanted to be directing theatrical films." Like many other young directors he made his entree into feature films by working for Roger Corman. He had met Corman through Martin Scorsese and, when Corman was looking for an editor, Scorsese recom-



CUJO PHOTOS: © 1983 WARNER BROS.

Dee Wallace, as Donna Trenton, protects her son against the murderous rabid dog.

mended Teague. *Cockfighter* was the first movie he edited for Corman and he soon moved onto second-unit direction. He made it to director on *Lady in Red*, an entertaining picture, written by John Sayles, about the woman who shot John Dillinger.

FANGORIA: Did you work closely with John Sayles in creating *Lady in Red* and *Alligator*?
Lewis Teague: We collaborated very closely on *Alligator* but not on *Lady in Red* because the script was virtually finished on that movie when I was brought in. But when Brandon Chase offered me *Alligator* he had a completely different script. I loved the idea and thought we could have a lot of fun with it, but I accepted the job on the condition that I could bring in a writer of my choice and rewrite the script from scratch. Brandon Chase was agreeable to that; he was familiar with Sayles' work and admired it, so, to his credit, he said yes. Sayles and I quickly fleshed out an idea and Sayles wrote the script very, very rapidly.
Fang: What were the changes you wanted to make after seeing the first screenplay?
Teague: The story we came up with is completely different. The only thing that remains from the original idea is the existence of alligators in the sewers. There was virtually nothing in the original script apart from that basic idea that I was interested in doing. What I *was* interested in doing, and the two big changes we made in the story, was that I wanted to do a film with some humor and I wanted to do a film that would be allegorical in some way. I'm not interested in doing a horror film or a suspense film just for suspense's sake. There was a concern of mine—and John and I spent a great deal of time talking about this—that the film should be allegorical in the sense that the existence of the alligator should be a manifestation of the hero's nightmares or fears. So then the discovery, pursuit and eventual vanquishing of the alligator by the Robert Forster character is allegorical to the conquering of the fears and guilt that exist in his soul.
Fang: Something I especially liked about *Alligator* was the way it incorporated humor into the story without defusing the thrills and suspense. When you were directing the picture, what were your ideas about maintaining this balance between humor and horror?
Teague: I didn't think of it so much as a balance, because I never felt that the elements were in conflict. I never felt the balance of humor in relation to the suspense was critical. I tried to maximize the suspense as much as possible within the limits of production and story, and maintain a sort of consistent droll attitude toward the material. Although I didn't think the *balance* of humor versus suspense was critical, the nature of the humor I felt was important. I never allowed it to drift into camp, in other words, the humor always came out of the comedy of the situation and never made fun of the situation. The characters always had to take the situations seriously. If I ever allowed the characters to not take the situation seriously, the humor would then become camp, and then suddenly the audience would become distanced from the material and that would destroy the suspense.
Fang: Robert Forster seemed particularly well suited for the role of the cop-hero in this movie. Were you involved in the casting of this part?
Teague: Yes, I fought for Bob in the picture. There was some pressure on producer Brandon Chase to go with somebody who might have been a little more commercial and, to Brandon's credit, he recognized that Bob would be more suitable than some of the other—quote-unquote—more commercial choices and ultimately decided to go along with Bob and make a better picture. I'm a big fan of Forster's. I directed second unit on a picture called *Avalanche* and had a chance to work with Forster on that; I was really impressed with his skill. So when I directed *Lady in Red*, I cast him in a small cameo in the picture. I was enormously appreciative of his help in that movie and I thought his cameo really stood out. I was just waiting for an opportunity to work with him again, and he was perfect for *Alligator*.
Fang: What was involved in the effects for *Alligator*?
Teague: Before I became involved in the picture, Brandon had hired an industrial designer to construct a full-sized rubber monster-alligator—I think it was 26 feet long. It never really worked. It looked great as long as it was stationary. We did a test with it to try to get it to walk, and I think that's what convinced me to do this picture as a comedy. We ended up using a variety of techniques to film the alligator. We had that full-sized rubber alligator, which was only useful for stationary shots; we had a mechanical head that was mounted on a moveable rig that we could use for closeups of the alligator chomping on things; we had a mechanical tail which was very strong and moved on a crane that we used for scenes of it swatting things; and we also used real alligators on miniature sets for a few shots. So we intercut all of those methods, and used a lot of shots from the alligator's point of view and tried not to show the alligator whenever possible.
Fang: You seem to have liked working with Brandon Chase on this picture.
Teague: Yeah, Brandon was very supportive. He made three critical decisions that I think are largely responsible for the success of the picture. First of all, the decision to go with me (laughs), secondly to let me work with John Sayles, and thirdly to go with Robert Forster.
Fang: On *Cujo*, another director, Peter Medek, had been originally named to make the movie. How did you get involved?
Teague: I was familiar with the material, I knew the producer, and I had read the book and the script. I had been very interested in the story from the start but I just wasn't available at that time. I had some specific ideas and attitudes toward the material that the producers agreed with, and then when things didn't work out with the other director, they called me back and I happened to be free to take the job and implement these ideas.
Fang: What were your ideas on adapting the book to the screen?

Dee Wallace goes one-on-one with the malevolent mutt.

Teague: The book had a lot of different elements in it, it was a real grab-bag of material; I decided, in order to extract what I felt was the central theme of the book, the aspect that I found most interesting, it was necessary to eliminate the occult element and reduce the minor characters. King told the story of the Camber family, that owned Cujo, in great detail and at great length in the book because he had the space to do that in a novel. In the film there just wasn't enough time to tell their story, so I tried to simplify that part as much as possible and concentrate on the story of the Trenton family. And, again, the same thing interested me in this book as interested me in the idea for *Alligator* in that they are both monster stories in which the monster also exists as allegory. I'm really interested in how people's lives are dominated by fear.This, I think, is a major element in my life and many other people's lives. Fear on a lot of different levels have to be contended with on a daily basis. We all live with the fear of the future, fear of financial insecurity, fear of failure, fear of wasting time, fear of not getting approval—the list is infinite. In *Cujo*, the story is about a family that's being torn apart by fear. The woman is afraid of growing old, afraid of being boring, afraid of wasting her life away, which leads her into a desperate affair with the local stud. The husband is afraid of financial disaster, he's afraid of not being a good father and good husband, he's afraid of losing his wife when he discovers the affair. And the child is also dominated by fear; he's aware of the division in the family and this is giving him nightmares and he imagines monsters in the closet. So it's really a story of how destructive fear is when we allow it to take hold of our lives and allow imaginary fears to become real. So, on one level, Cujo is a creation of imaginary fears in the Trenton family.

Fang: I have learned that Warner Bros. is not including Cujo the rabid dog at all in their promotion of the movie and instead is emphasizing the relationships in the story and, in particular, the theme of betrayal. Do you think this is an appropriate representation of the picture as you directed it?

Teague: I think it's appropriate. Even though, in the book, Donna Trenton is eventually trapped in her Pinto for three days by this rabid dog, this vicious monster, and even though it's the most powerful and suspenseful part of the film, the film is about a lot more than just a rabid dog. The suspense and the effectiveness of the ending is a result of the fact that we have realized the connection between this event and fears that are tearing the Trenton family apart. I think if it was sold as a rabid-dog movie, it would really diminish the content enormously. So I think it's a lot wiser to sell it just on the basis of it being a Stephen King suspense film about this particular family.

Fang: The violence in the book *Cujo* is very graphic. How were the dog attacks handled in the movie?

Teague: I focused more on the suspense than on the graphicness of the attack. We had to be graphic to a certain degree, but I didn't find it necessary or effective to show the dog ripping a lot of people apart. It had to be done realistically and it had to be believable, but I was more concerned with the terror and the suspense than with the gore.

Fang: What was it like directing a main character that was played by an animal?

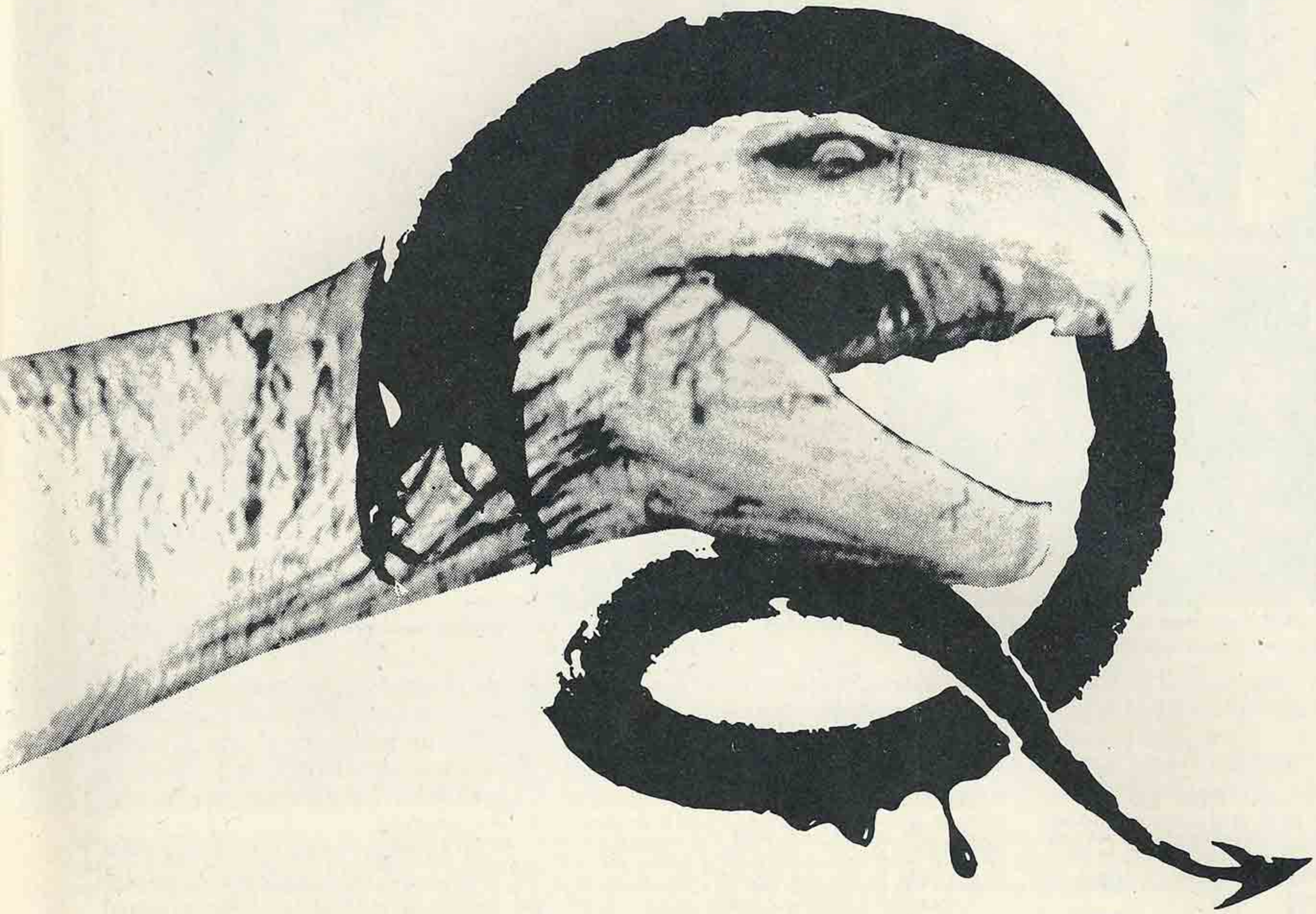
Teague: I'm real good at that. (laughs) If you've directed an alligator you can direct anything. Seriously, the experience of working on *Alligator* was enormously helpful on this picture. The dog develops super powers; his disease and his mania give him a monstrous strength far beyond what any normal Saint Bernard would have, and to bring this off we used a variety of techniques. We had six Saint Bernards, each trained for a different specialty. We had mechanical Saint Bernards, we had mechanical Saint-Bernard heads for other shots. The guy primarily responsible for the models and the mechanical stuff was Peter Knowlton, who also did makeup effects. In an awful lot of Cujo's scenes we were able to use real dogs; we relied very heavily on them. Carl Beller was the dog trainer and he was a magician with dogs. In all, a lot of the lessons I learned on *Alligator* were effectively employed on this picture.

Fang: With *Alligator* and *Cujo* now under your belt, do you have any plans at this point to make other thrillers?

Teague: I'm developing several projects right now but there's nothing definite yet. I'm working on a love story and I'm working on a comedy, but I do like thrillers and I want to do another suspense film. I enjoy them and I've developed a certain amount of expertise in that area that I'd like to apply again.

Dee Wallace must endure a harrowing siege in her broken-down Pinto as Cujo closes in.

LARRY COHEN &



The man who brought you It's Alive *delivers a different kind of monster movie.*

by Bob Martin

All Larry Cohen wanted to do, when he was a kid, was go to the movies. In the part of Manhattan where he was raised, there was one RKO theater, and one Loew's, each with a double-feature every week, and on Mondays and Tuesdays they'd show "B" pictures—cheaply made Westerns, which he didn't particularly care for, and crime pictures featuring the various pulp detectives of the 40's era.

"My folks would want to send me to camp each summer," he recalls, "when all I wanted was to stay in the city and see a movie every day. But they'd send me to camp, and I'd run away; finally I'd be sent back to the city as a disciplinary problem by August, I'd at least have a month of going to movies.

"I always wanted to make movies; even when I was a kid. I must have made my first movie when I was about 12, in Fort Tryon Park up in Washington Heights, with friends who agreed to play in the picture. I paid my first cast in comic books—I had to bribe my friends into being in the picture by giving up part of my comic book collection. I had no facilities for editing, so I had to learn to cut the pictures in the camera... come in for a close-up, run back and do a wide shot, come back in for another close-up, go around for an over-the-shoulder shot, and run back over for another wide shot."

The movies that stirred Cohen's desire to make films included *The Adventures of Robin Hood* with Errol Flynn, a pulp-derived crime series featuring the enigmatic Whistler, and the gritty dramas of crime and punishment being produced at that time by Warner Brothers. And on days that he didn't go to the movies, he'd read comic books—particularly those titles that shared the qualities of the movies he most admired, like *Blackhawk*, concerning a group of air aces constantly engaged in a battle against injustice, and *Crime Does Not Pay*, a "crime comic" that carried hard-edged gangster tales in the Warner Brothers tradition (it was later put out of business, along with every other crime title, by the same pressures for comic book censorship that put the EC horror comics out of business in the early 50's).

Cohen's background makes perfect sense, when you consider his films *Black Caeser* (a "blaxploitation" remake of *Little Caeser*), *The Secret Files of J. Edgar Hoover*, and *I, the Jury* (the recent Mike Hammer film, written by Cohen). But Cohen is far better known (to our readers, at least) as writer, producer and director of *It's Alive, It Lives Again*, and *Demon* (a.k.a. *God Told Me To*), yet he claims no particular affection for horror in films or in literature.

Perhaps that's why Cohen's horror films aren't quite like anyone else's. And it also helps to explain why, as certain critics and horror traditionalists dismiss Cohen's horror films as exploitative trash, audiences flock to them.

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Candy Clark plays the woman in the life of Jimmy Quinn (Moriarty). Can her love turn a simpering weasel into a hero of epic proportions? Maybe not, but it can't hurt.

Cohen's early films, particularly *Demon*, are well worth a detailed examination, which we hope to have in these pages in a future issue. Of more immedate interest is *Q*, Cohen's newest film. If I may inject my own opinion, it is the best, and funniest, monster movie I've seen since *The Howling*. *Q* works not only as a horror film, but as a comedy and as a human drama as well.

"We wanted to transcend the form, and do something different," Cohen says. "I was tired of seeing the same old slasher movies, the same old hunting of teenagers and killing girls. . . I thought that the whole thing was getting imitative and tiresome—a young girl getting killed on her wedding night in one picture, sorority girls getting killed in another. Mass killers galore. I just thought we needed to get back to the old big monster pictures.

"I thought of having a movie about a giant bird creature that comes to New York and lives in the tower of a skyscraper. At first people don't know why ladies are disappearing from rooftops and construction workers are vanishing. By and by they come to realize that there is something up there, living off people. Then I had to find a reason-for-being for that creature.

"Then I visited Mexico City, where there still stands a temple of Quetzalcoatl, a god of the ancient Aztecs that they believed would return one day. And in the historical literature it said that when the Spaniards con-

David Carridine's performance as Detective Sheperd serves as an anchor to the film's flights of fancy. At right, Quetzalcoatl gets a grip on Manhattan's Banker's Trust building.

Sparse, but effective use of stop motion animation brings *Q*'s title creature to life. The sequences were animated by David Allen and Randy Cook, using models built by Cook for the picture, and miniature sets built by Dennis Gordon. Says Allen, "Of course, we don't have the resources of an ILM, but I think that some of the things we did compare favorably with their work."

quered Mexico, they discovered thousands and thousands of human skills in the temple, of people who had been sacrificed. So then I had to figure how to get that bird to New York."

Q is in many ways a return to the giant monsters of yore. But that's only a part of it. Dominating the human part of the story is Jimmy Quinn, a character that, Cohen says, "could have stepped right out of *Crime Does Not Pay*." Despite many other fine qualities, Quinn is a cheap hood, a three-time loser, played with incredible energy by Michael Moriarty (best known as the lead Nazi in TV's *Holocaust*). Quinn's fellow gangsters are after him for the loot they think he's got (he lost it); and of course the cops aren't too fond of him either. But at his lowest point, Quinn finds the possible solution to all his problems, when he stumbles upon the hideout of the monster—a giant nest in Manhattan's Chrysler Building. "We chose the Chrysler Building because it's the most bird-like building in the city," Cohen says. "It has bird-like gargoyles all around it and the whole top has a feathered look. It also has a very shiny, silvery look. I thought that, if a strange creature like that were to come to New York, it might mistake our skyscrapers for temples of some kind—and they are, they're temples of commerce and industry. The bird would arrive in this city and think that it had reached Mecca. And then, in the most attractive of these towers, it would make its nest. At the end, it lands on the turret of the Banker's Trust building on Wall Street, which is shaped very much like the Quetzalcoatl pyramid in Mexico.

"In *Q*," Cohen continues, "the monster thing is almost secondary to the dramatic story, largely because the Moriarty character is so well-drawn and so entertaining. In most monster pictures, the monster keeps coming on every 15 minutes, and in between you have these terrible dull sequences with a girl scientist and a male scientist—never anyone you can relate to. Our story is about a guy who is basically a loser—he never gives up, though. He's a guy with problems that everyone can relate to."

Much of the film's drama depends on the question of whether Quinn will choose to be a man or a weasel, once he has the opportunity to save the city. And the drama works because Quinn, despite all of his slimy qualities, is a *likeable* crook; you *want* to see him end his losing streak.

While the demands of Moriarty's role range from simpers and grovels to hysteria to defiance, David Carradine's is a rock-steady portrayal of a "good cop" that serves as an anchor to the crime-and-monster fantasy. But Carradine gets a chance to shine here and there as well, particularly in one scene, where he explains to a fellow officer his outlandish theory of a "giant bird" that is killing New Yorkers.

This scene, and other like them in *Q*, are a perfect marriage of the right dialogue to the right actor, made possible only by the fact that Cohen writes, produces and directs the majority of his films. "I prefer it that way," says Cohen, "because I can work inside my head, rather than having to explain everything I'm doing to somebody else. If other people are involved, you have to explain, you have to confer and give reasons—I'm not interested in doing that! If I come up with an idea, I want to do it. I don't want to stop and call up a producer and say, 'Listen, I've got an idea for a scene, but I've got to change the schedule around.' As writer, producer and director, I can sit down, write it on a piece of paper and do it."

While a few of the critics have failed to recognize *Q* as the artful film that it is, they seem to be unanimous in their praise for Moriarty. "He was super," says Cohen. "Last night I saw him on a cable show, and he said that this was his best piece of film acting, and I would agree. He's usually gotten roles that required him to be contained and controlled, almost monotone. That worked very well in

Holocaust, and that's the way people are accustomed to seeing him. But he says that this is what he wants to do, he wants to do more flamboyant parts, he wants to do comedy. It was partly the marriage of material to the actor with the potential to do it, and partly his response to me, to my sense of humor and my enthusiasm for the picture. He was comfortable enough with me to realize that he could try anything, and that I would laugh and enjoy it, and if it wasn't what I wanted, we would try something else. We'd do scenes five different ways; I'd give him different ideas, and he would give me five different performances of any scene, each one completely valid in terms of the character, but each with a different approach.

"Working with any actor, it's important to create an atmosphere where the actor is relaxed, where he feels he can do something above and beyond what he's usually going to do, on a TV guest spot or anything else. Most good actors are capable of walking through almost any part, getting through a day's work and getting paid. You avoid that by gaining the confidence of the actor, by being enthusiastic about the work, and by being the actor's best audience. On a set, there's nobody to play to, nobody to laugh. I try to supply the laughter and the applause, so the actor can give that extra push, dig a little bit deeper, and not worry about making a fool out of himself."

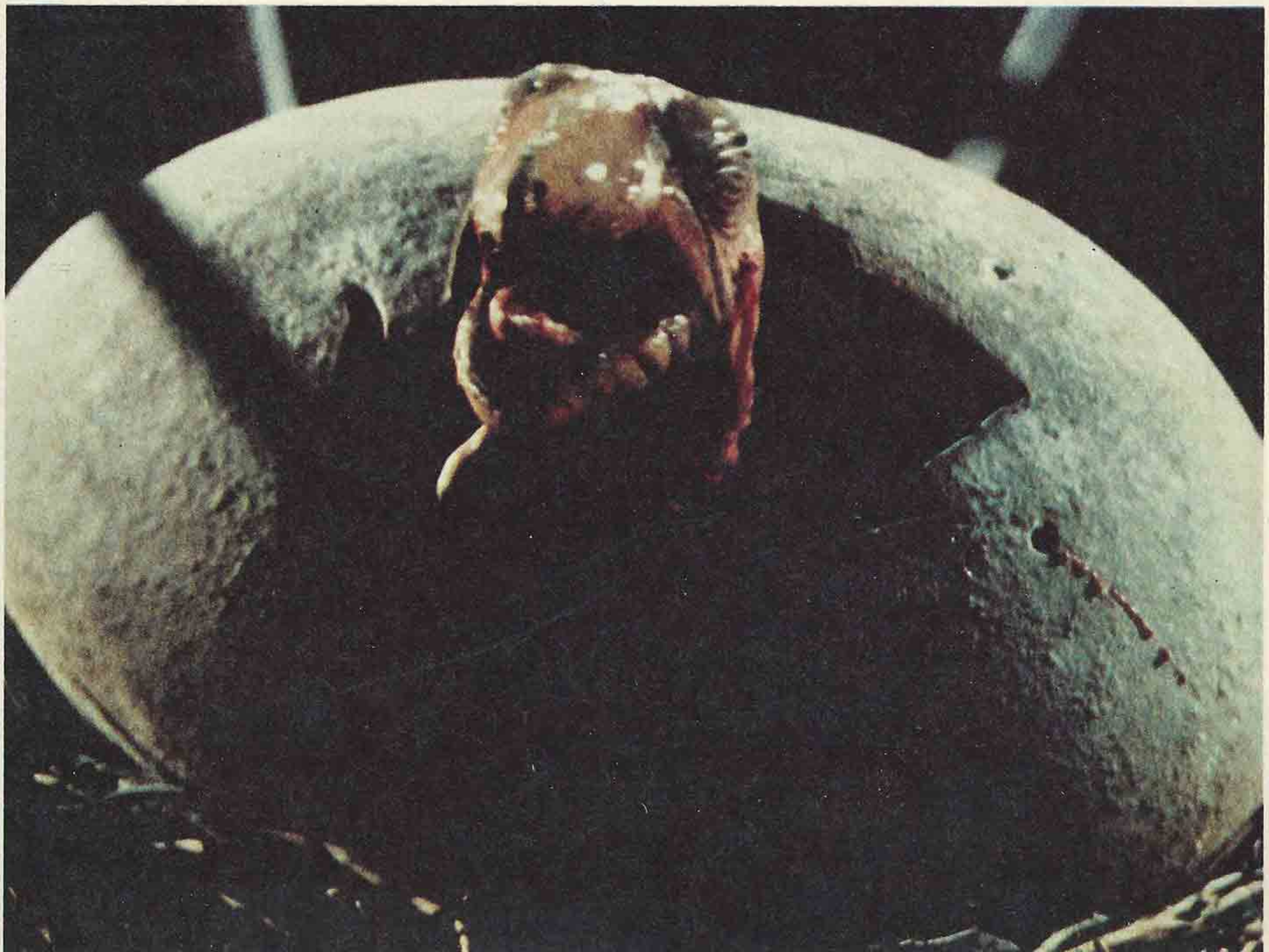
Q has a wide variety of effects, all used rather sparsely; David Allen and Randy Cook built and animated the title creature immediately after their work on *Caveman*, and Peter Kuran supplied a cel-animated shadow that flies across the Manhattan skyline. The newspaper critics have given more attention, however, to several brief shots of a sacrificial victim being flayed alive. "We felt it was necessary to distinguish between the killings performed by the bird and those performed by the High Priest; and a lot of people wouldn't know what 'flayed' meant unless we showed it. It's a very simple effect; it's startling on the screen because the concept of it is so shocking, but all it is is peeling off a layer of latex. That's been in other movies— in *The List of Adrian Messenger*, at the end of the film everyone in the cast pulls off their faces, it was a joke! The same effect becomes shocking just because we say it's someone being flayed. I think a much more upsetting scene—and objectionable, if you must find something to object to—would be the scene in *Poltergeist*, where the fellow pulls his face apart."

The effects of *Q*, while sufficient to establish the drama's motivating force, are relatively limited, a very unusual situation in horror films these days. Could Cohen have reached the conclusion that the effects movies have reached a dead end? "Well, you can't have more effects than *Tron*," says Cohen. "You're dulled by them, after awhile; you get to a point where you've seen enough of them. Effects are wonderful; in a movie, you sit and wait for them, and when they come, if they're good, it's great. But when you're beseiged with them from beginning to end, it offers diminishing returns. It's like an orchestra playing at full fever pitch from beginning to end; there's no ups and no downs.

"What's happened is that a few special effects movies were inordinately popular, so people have said let's spend more and more money on more and more effects. But it's not the effect—it's the way the effect is set up. In *E.T.*, for instance, the bicycles fly; it's not a particularly well-executed matte, but you're so involved in the picture, you don't care if there's a little matte-line in one of the shots. You'll see the same sort of effect in Walt Disney pictures, like *The Absent Minded Professor*, a flying car that's funny and cute; in *E.T.* the same effect is an emotional experience, you're thrilled. The different is in the dramatic set-up, not in the effect.

"Of course, I realize a lot of fans are going to see these movies five and six times to see how the effects are done, and they buy these magazines that go into all the details of how everything is done. Me, I don't want to know how Houdini goes through the wall; I just want to enjoy the performance, and let magic be magic."

We're all for letting magic be magic, but Steve Neill built this particular critter, and manipulated it during its scenes. Neill also engineered the human sacrifice sequences—it's his hand holding the cutting tools that you see on screen. Don't forget—that's Neill with *two* l's!



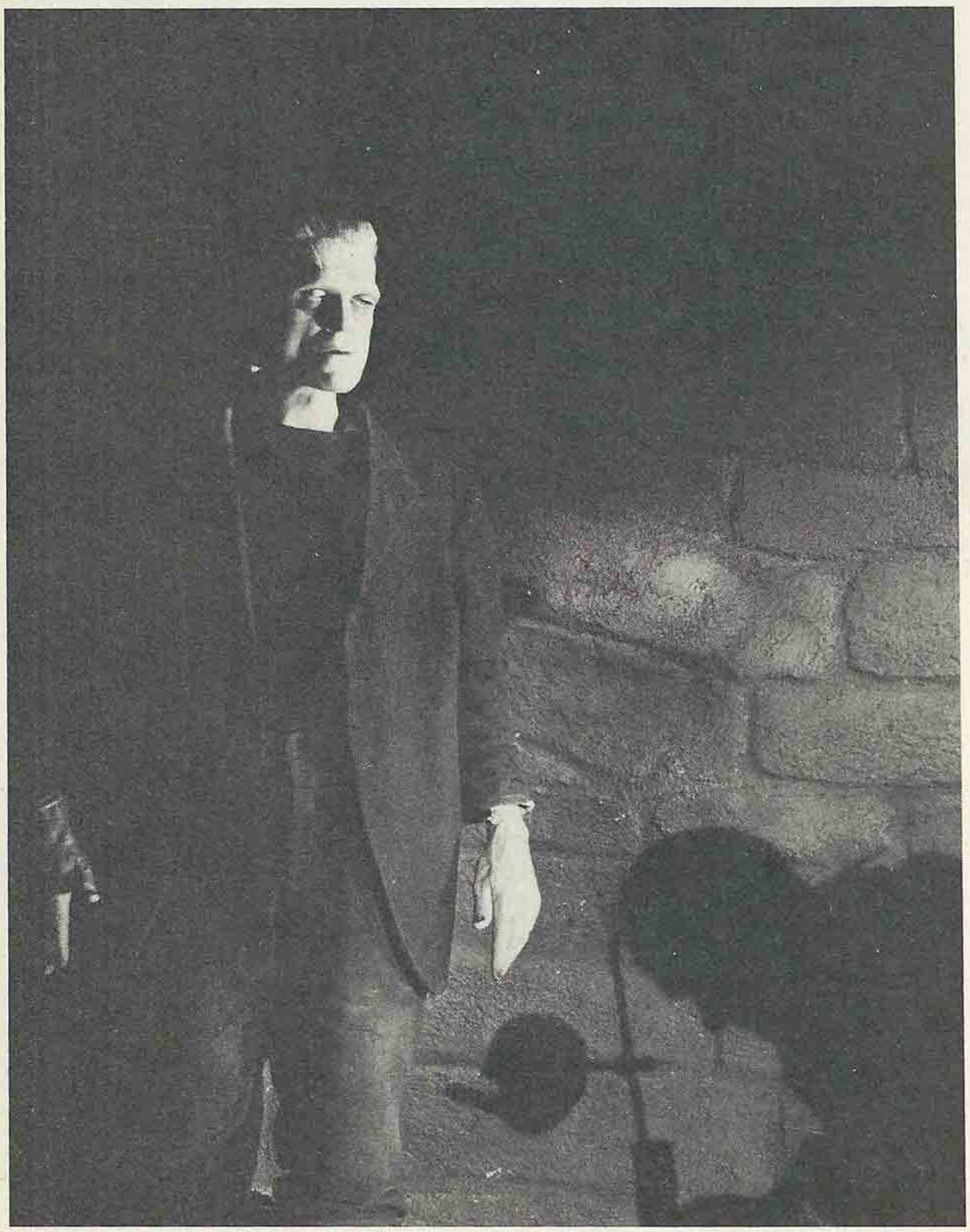
Old Horror, New Horror

An Esteemed Film Historian Takes a Sharp Look at the Classic Style of Horror Filmmaking and Compares it to the Screen's New Breed of Gory Terror.

By William K. Everson

William K. Everson is the author of many fine books on movie history, including *The Bad Guys, A Pictorial History of the Western Film* and *Classics of the Horror Film*.

Frequently the pages of FANGORIA echo to the sounds of battle as younger readers extoll the virtues of new special-effects and gore-laden horror films, and older readers write lovingly of the style and simplicity of the earlier horror films. One of the problems is that, thanks to television and new video-tape, the old is now equally accessible along with the new, and seen side by side, invite comparisons measured by the same sets of standards. This is something not limited to the horror film alone of course, and almost every genre of film presents like critical problems. If FANGORIA had a sister magazine devoted to comedy, doubtless younger viewers, delighted with such films as *10* and *Victor/Victoria* would be wondering how we old fogies could ever have been satisfied with *Trouble in Paradise* or *Desire*, where nobody ever disrobed and where a discreet fadeout left whatever went on in the bedroom tot he imagination. But when one is measuring one against the other, it is essential to try to put the older work into the context of its time, and that is what I would like to do here with the horror films of that first great wave of 1930-35, bounded by *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* at one end, and *Mad Love* and *Bride of Frankenstein* at the other. For no genre has changed as much as the horror film, has benefitted so much from the improvements in technology, or has exploited the so-called "free screen" so much in its use of now permissible violence and nudity.



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF WILLIAM K. EVERSON

Simplicity, solid-looking sets, low-key lighting and much shadow work were hallmarks of the earlier horror films. Karloff and the shadow of Colin Clive in James Whale's original *Frankestein* (1931).

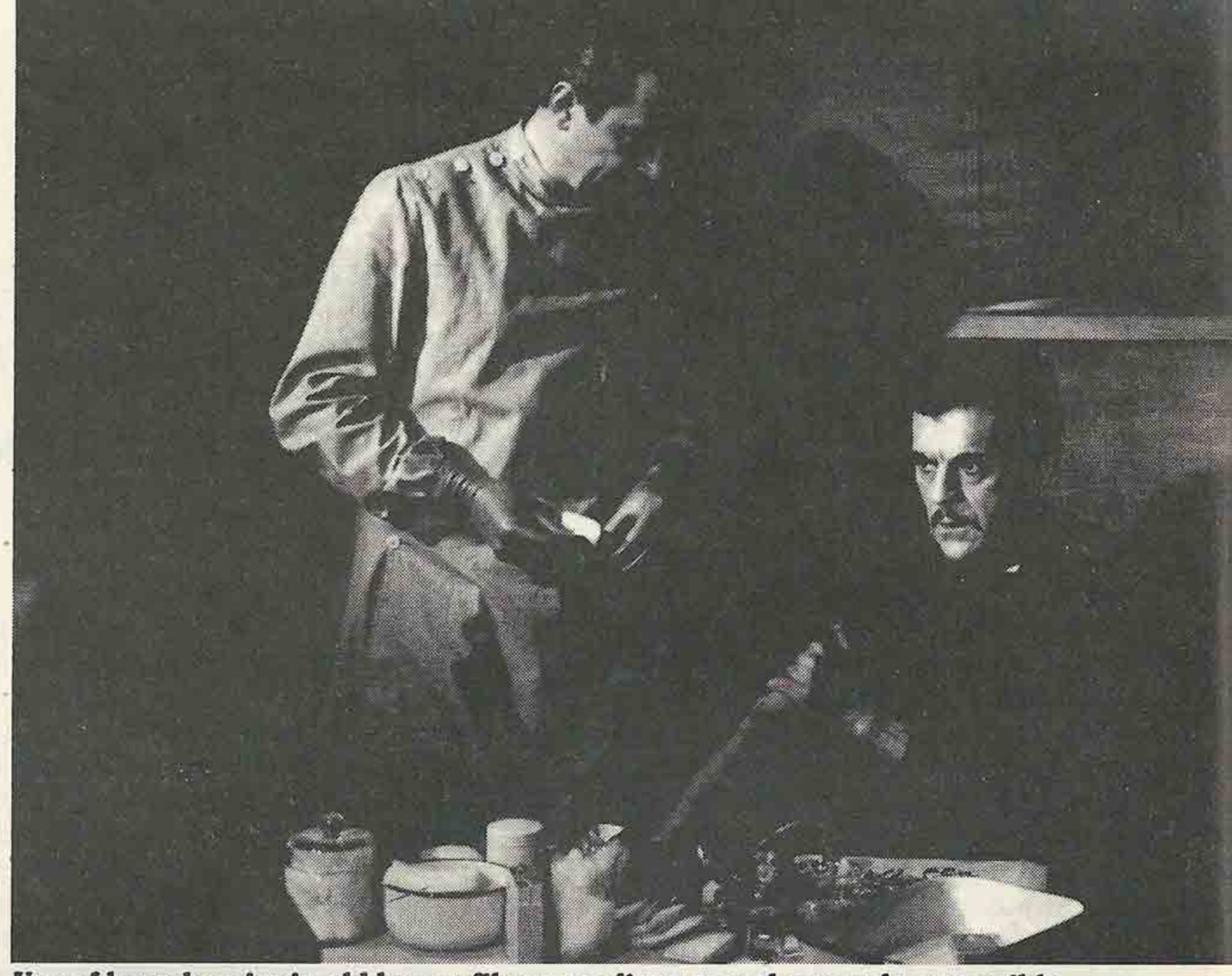
It is important to remember that the horror film (which depends so much on sound, and at times on the *witholding* of sound) virtually arrived with the coming of sound. There had been silent ancestors, such as Rex Ingram's *The Magician* and some of the Lon Chaney films, but they were relatively few, often disappointing because silence forced them into unsubtleties, and as a genre discouraged by critics who felt that such fare was both revolting and tasteless, and had no place in a medium designed for family entertainment. Thus when the horror film *was* established with sound, it was new and fresh, free of cliches, and free of the need to outdo the competition except perhaps by being different from it. And audiences then were not inured to horror the way they are today. They hadn't seen the real-life horrors of the Nazi death camps on the newsreels, or the real death and destruction of Korea and Vietnam on their TV screens. Even if they had had television in 1930, they couldn't have switched channels casualy and caught *Them*! here, *King Kong* there and *Night of the Living Dead* somewhere else, because none of these films—or their like—had been made yet. Today's generation has of course seen the earlier, classic group of horror films primarily via television. Not only has this reduced them stylistically, diminishing their pictorial values and destroying tensions through the insertion of commercials, but, more important, it has meant that they have been seen in a milieu of warmth, security and comfort, with the ice-box only a step or two away.

Seen on a large screen where subtle visual shocks could be magnified, there was an almost electrical tension—input from the entire audience that was somehow fed back *to* that audience. The early 30's was of course the time of the depression, and audiences as a whole were tense and insecure to begin with. If they went to a comedy to laugh and forget those tensions, they may well have given the comedy a greater laugh reaction than it really deserved. Conversely, the horror film could and did *exploit* those tensions. The shared excitement of a *subtle* thrill in a packed theatre is something that has almost been forgotten now. (I'm not talking about the shared reaction to an unsubtle *shock*; that's not quite the same thing, but more on that later!)

To audiences not accustomed to vampires, werewolves and sundry monsters, the *idea* alone was chilling enough in itself. Even if a director had wanted to go overboard in scenes of violence, he would have been held in check by the industry's own censorship, and more importantly by fear of overseas censorship. In Europe especially, American horror films were deemed somewhat unhealthy, and since most European countries had strictly enforced censorship rules which in many cases kept under-16's from attending certain types of films at all, to have overdone the violence would have resulted in losing many markets—or facing going into release with severely cut prints. In Britain, even an "H" certificiate (denoting a horror content, and prohibiting attendance by anybody under 16) was no guarantee of an uncut release. The British censors had unassailable ideas about "taste", and frequently cut scenes even from adults-only horror films (*Bride of Frankenstein* and *Return of the Vampire* being typical examples) purely on the grounds that they were tasteless. To the credit of the British distributors, these scenes were very smoothly excised, sometimes with additional footage removed to make the cuts virtually invisible. (It was something of a bonus to me to catch these scenes unexpectedly and for the first time when I came to live in the United States after years in Britain).

This censorial restraint meant that directors (and the directors of early horror films were some of the finest in the buiness: James Whale, Tod Browning, Rouben Mamoulian, Michael Curtiz, Karl Freund, Robert Florey) *had* to use their imaginations, to suggest rather than to show. And that meant that audiences had to use *their* imaginations too. Once you have an audience working with you in a horror film you have it made. Nothing a director can dream up can ever match the horrors that the individual human mind can conceive, since, properly prompted, it will create the horrors that frighten *it* the most. I think the most frightening horror film ever made is Carl Dreyer's *Vampyr*, in which virtually nothing happens, but in which one is constantly made to feel that something indescribable is taking place just *behind* one. Nightmares aren't always easy to recall in detail, but if you think back to the one that frightened you the most—and I think we *all* have one of those—you'll probably find that the actual object of all the terror was *unseen*. One that I had at age nine was a classic, so vivid that I could story-board it today, shot by shot. Like all good nightmares it had the sense of both participation *and* observation, the quality that Dreyer caught so superbly (and often literally) in *Vampyr*.

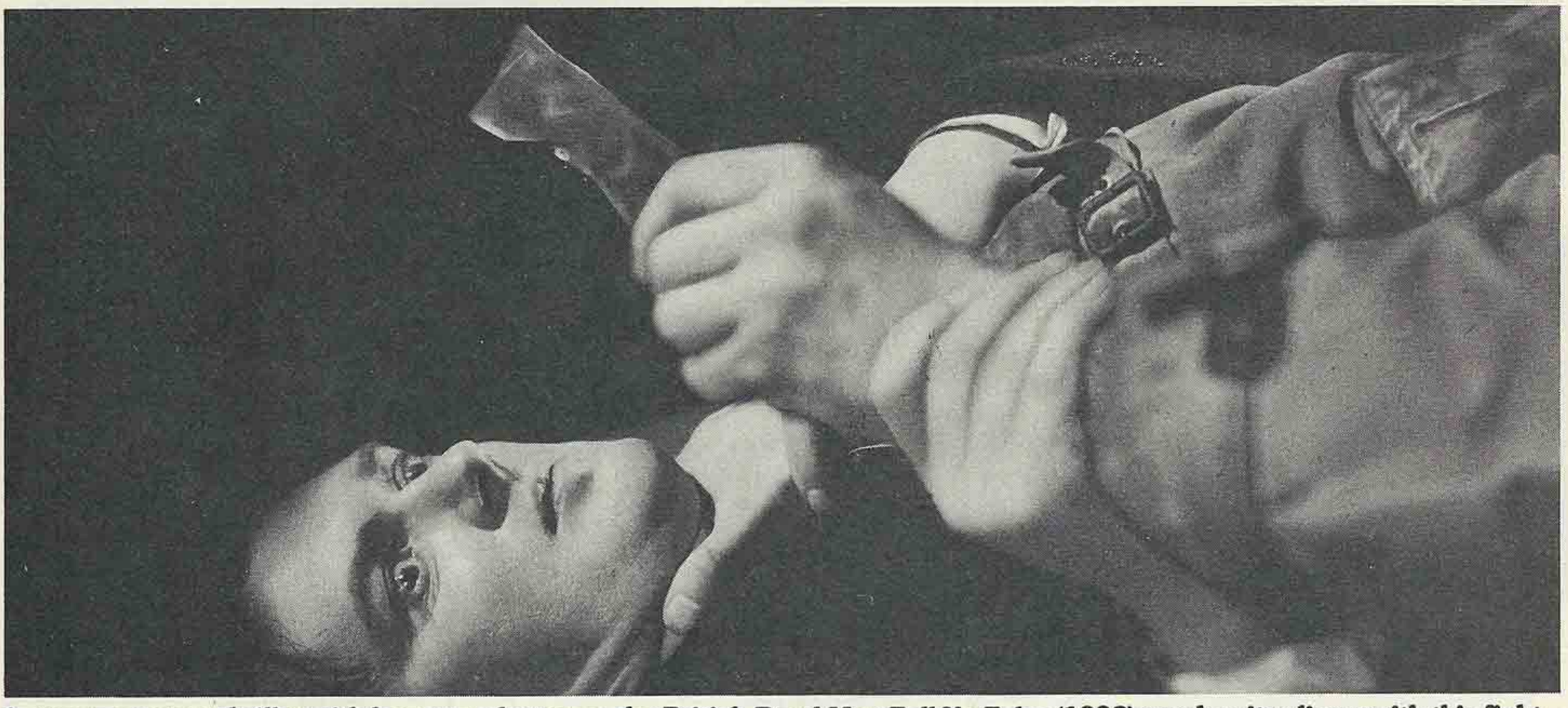
Even with their relatively limited physical horror, the early chillers were attacked by many critics. They admired the skill, but wondered where the audiences were coming from. *Frankenstein* was stated to be far too gruesome for average public consumption. In order to maintain their momentum, writers and directors came up with new themes rather than added violence. *Mystery of the Wax Museum*, only two years after *Frankenstein*, was described by one critic as "a charnel house of horrors", quite putting to shame all that had preceded it. Common



Use of hypodermics in old horror films was discouraged as much as possible, their use to be implied as much as possible, and actual injections avoided . . . a stricture that would leave current horror producers quite high and dry. Above: In *The Invisible Ray* (1935) use of hypo is de-emphasized, while in (Below:) *The Ape* (1940) Karloff lets the audience know it's there—but injection into spinal column of Stanford Jolley is conveniently hidden by the position of his body.

denominators of all of these early thrillers was restraint and, surprisingly, good taste. Blood was rare; a stain or a trickle once in a while, never more. We occasionally got to see a brain pickled in alcohol, particularly when Dwight Frye was around, invariably selecting the "evil" brain over the "good" one, but individual and bloody segments of the anatomy, from eyes to hands, *never*. No more was needed: the films were so skilfully crafted that they *did* indeed thrill. Sitting through *The Mummy* in 1932 was far more a test of courage and endurance for audiences of that period than *Dawn of the Dead* would be for a contemporary audience.

However, the early chillers did more than shock and thrill, and they were a unique product of their time. When sound came in, Hollywood (quite wrongly) felt that movies that now talked had to be contemporary and to be "honest", with the result that most of the films of that period dealt with current themes and milieus—which meant the depression, unemployment, crime, prostitution. Many of them wre notable for a kind of casual, callous realism, but as a group they removed from movies all the romanticism and beauty that had been such a characteristic of the silent film. Audiences that had loved silent films found that the things that they liked about them best, both thematically and stylistically, were being suppressed by the new so-called realism of the talkies. Oddly enough, only two groups of film—the short-lived, often Technicolored operettas (*The Desert Song, Golden Dawn, Rio Rita*) and the horror films—catered to this void, and they didn't do it simultaneously. The operettas came and went in 1929/30, and the horror films arrived in 30/31. I don't suggest that the audience for one became the audience for the other; but the horror films did, oddly enough, provide the same sense of escapism that the operettas had, and the same highly stylised visual link to the silent period. Veryuch influenced by the silent German fantasies, the early horror films used superbly designed sets and often brilliantly evocative lighting. They were, for a time at least, the only visually interesting films being made, while *Dr. X* and *Mystery of the Wax Museum* pioneered the use of the new Technicolor in a dramatic sense. Hitherto, talkies had used Technicolor almost exclusively in musicals. Another quality that gave these early horror films an odd kind of charm was that most of them, with their Beauty-and-the-Beast motifs and their well-controlled sexuality, were essentially fairy-stories. 1935's *Bride of Frankenstein* is



A strong mystery-thriller with horror undertones, the British *Dead Men Tell No Tales* (1938) reaches its climax with this fight between hero Hugh Williams and the murderer that was resolved when the sliver of glass was suddenly thrust upwards into the villain's off-screen throat, an act effectively denoted by a drop or two of blood falling down on the hero—a scene far more gripping than the unrestrained razor-slashing in DePalma's *Dressed to Kill*.

***Dark Eyes of London* was first British horror film to pull out stops and feature strong violence—by 1939 standards. Here Wilfrid Walter, a blind monster, acting on orders from Bela Lugosi (of course), prepares to drown a victim.**

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perhaps the best example of the horror film as fairy-story, while the 1939 *Son of Frankenstein* is one of the best examples of the horror film as nightmare.

On the whole, it's easier to scare people than to make people laugh. We all have *different* senses of humor, and what is funny can be affected by what is going on around us. Comedies, locked into the depression, or to the homefront problems of the war years, often seem both unfunny and pointless to audiences who don't know those periods. But fear is more basic, and the things that frighten us don't change that much. So that the stylists who made those early horror films, working with themes that were new, and audiences that hadn't been scared much by the movies, had a virtually virgin field to work in. Horror filmmakers today labor under tremendous difficulties: everything costs too much, and everything has been done before. The only trick left is (to their way of thinking) to outdo the competition in *shock* value. It's never difficult to revolt or nauseate an audience, and while films like the remake of *The Thing* and the current *The Evil Dead* would seem to have reached the limit, alas they haven't. As we become accustomed to one kind of explicit revulsion, that which now seems unthinkable will first become daring, then fashionable, and then old hat. And then on to something else. I hate to predict the lengths to which movie-makers may be going in five years to stimulate audience attention. In one way, one can't really blame them too much. When a dedicated filmmaker like Robert Wise tries to buck the tide by returning to a more dignified and craftsmanlike kind of thriller, horror fans desert him in droves. His *Audrey Rose* of a few years ago was a beautifully made thriller, almost like one of his Val Lewton films given color and a big budget. But it flopped abysmally. It had none of the gore and action that audiences expected; in fact its biggest thrill was the unexpected breaking of a concentrated tension when a tea-cup falls to the floor and shatters. Hoping to salvage it and eke out a few dollars, the distributors double-billed it with a reissue of *Carrie*—to no avail. And of course, Wise is one of the very few stylists left: if Jacques Tourneur, James Whale, Michael Curtiz, Val Lewton and Robert Florey were still alive and making films, there might be a little more variety in today's horror fare, though certainly not a complete turnaround since audiences do now want and apparently enjoy the concentration on shock and explicit visual violence.

However, I'm sure that it's not nostalgia alone that makes these older horror films so enjoyable still, *on their own merits*, to those of us who first encountered them when they were new. Where is the horror film today that has the *literacy* of Wise's *The Body Snatcher* or Whale's *The Bride of Frankenstein*, the sense of design of *The Black Cat* by Ulmer, or Florey's *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, the bravura (but often also subtle and sensitive) acting of Karloff, Lugosi, Atwill or Colin Clive, and most of all the horror films that excite us because, at least while we're seeing them, they also *convince* us, as did the Tourneur duo *Cat People* and *Night of the Demon*, and most of all of course, Dreyer's *Vampyr*?

It's unfortunate, I think, that the incredible achievements of movie trickery and special effects have reached a kind of overkill. *Poltergeist* is full of the most incredible and ingenious effects, as is *An American Werewolf in London*. Yet the most effective portion of the latter (and its only really frightening segment) is its uneasy opening, patterned so much on the restrained style of the early 30's work. Any *two* of the great shock effects in *Poltergeist* would have been enough to make any horror film outstanding 30 years ago. As it is, shock follows shock with such regularity that admiration becomes passivity and passivity becomes numbness. I enjoyed *Poltergeist* a great deal when I saw it and admired its tremendous skill, yet when I think back to it now no one scene comes to mind as either distinguishing or characterising the whole film—as when, thinking back to the 1932 *The Mummy*, I first recall the simple shot of a tattered bandage being dragged across the sandy floor of the tomb in the wake of the Mummy's return to life.

Subtlety *needn't* be absent from the current violent breed. I suspect that *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* was as popular a film as it was because it was also a much subtler film than anyone is prepared to admit. Early in the film one is shown one of the protagonists deliberately inflicting a knife cut on himself. It's a minor wound, but the tactic works. The audience reasons, "My God, with a title like that, and a scene like this so early in the film, what on earth can be coming up later?" Actually nothing else is quite as explicit as that one simple scene and all the other and greater outrages are implied rather than shown—but the audience has been hooked, and will probably swear to having *seen* things in the film that were actually only suggested to them.

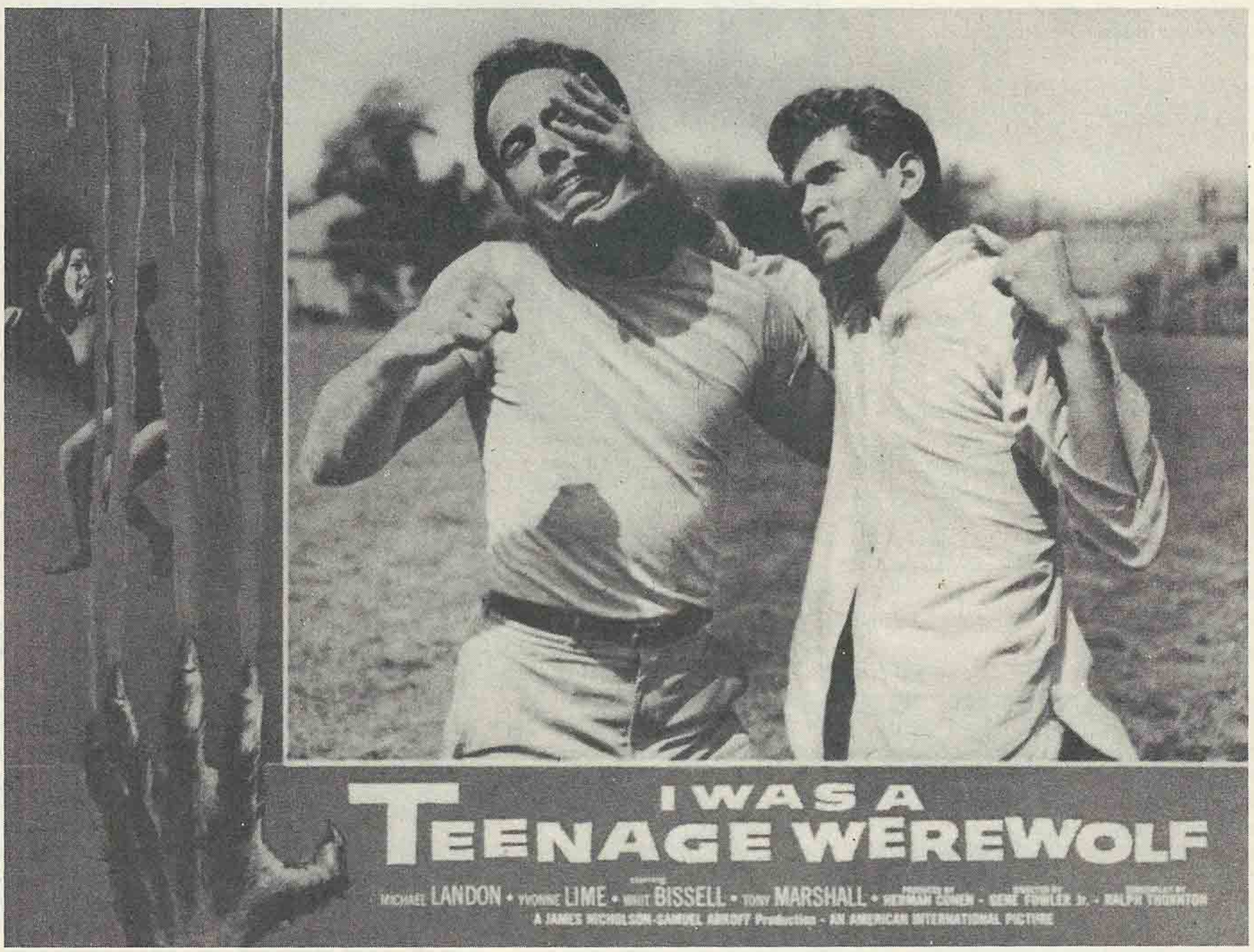
Perhaps, in the long run, one can only judge the value of the current horror film by waiting another 30 years. Certainly in 1939 and 1940, nobody thought of Karloff's little Columbia films *The Man They Couldn't Hang* and *The Man With Nine Lives* as anything but efficient little time-killing thrillers. Today the moral issues they raise are both stimulating and absorbing, while Karloff's "absurd and pointless" medical experiments in those films have now proven to be both practical and valuable, and have been absorbed into general medical practice.

It's difficult to know what *The Evil Dead* can tell us in 30 years—except maybe things about ourselves that we'd rather NOT know—but all we can do is wait and see.

A Teenage Werewolf and a Monster Marriage

Director Gene Fowler, Jr. Looks Back at his 50's Classics—I Was a Teenage Werewolf *and* I Married a Monster From Outer Space

By David Everitt



TEENAGE WEREWOLF PHOTOS: © 1957 AIP

With the help of Fowler's first-rate direction, this exploitation hit sparked the teenage-terror trend of the 50's as well as Michael Landon's acting career.

Before 1957, who would have suspected that horror movies and true confessions would have combined forces to produce one of the most successful exploitation-film phenomena of the 50's? Certainly not Gene Fowler, Jr., and he directed the movie that kicked off the trend, *I Was a Teenage Werewolf,* as well as *I Married a Monster From Outer Space* one year later. In a decade filled with spectacular film titles, the names *I Was a Teenage Werewolf* and *I Married a Monster From Outer Space* stood alone in the forefront of no-holds-barred 50's sensationalism and spawned a notoriety that has lasted to this day. But, as extraordinary as the titles are, what is most intriguing about these two horror-confessions is that they are actually *good movies*. Much of the credit for this dramatic, in addition to box-office success is due to the professionalism and dedication of the doubting director Fowler who was so surprised by the popularity of a werewolf in a high school jacket.

The care and attention to detail that Fowler applied to these two exploitation projects evolved out of 20 years experience in the movie industry. His father, Gene Fowler, Sr., was a well known author who wrote many successful screenplays in between book contracts. His book on the life of the great silent comedy producer Mack Sennett played an instrumental part in bringing Fowler, Jr. into the film business. Fowler, Jr. was introduced by his father to an editor of Sennett's, at that time working at 20th Century-Fox, who asked if the young man would be interested in working with him in the cutting room. Already with ambitions to direct, Fowler accepted the offer because he knew that editing would put him in touch with nearly every facet of filmmaking. The first film he worked on was a 1935 Dick Powell musical called *Thanks a Million*, and he went on to edit such pictures as *Week-end in Havana*, *The Ox-Bow Incident* and *Western Union*. The latter picture was directed by the great German director Fritz Lang whom Fowler describes as his tutor. Lang, who made such classic thrillers as *Metropolis* and *M*, provided lessons in ominous filmmaking that Fowler would later put to use in his own thrillers of the 50's.

Fowler got his first opportunity to direct in the early days of television in a successful series called *China Smith* starring Dan Duryea as an adventurer in the Far East. Around this time, remembers Fowler, "I was working next door to a fellow named Herman Cohen [see Fango #18] who used to

drop by the cutting room to talk to me. Finally, one day he said, 'Would you like to direct a picture?' And I said yes. He said, 'This is a picture with a horrible title but it's going to be very successful.' And that of course, was *I Was a Teenage Werewolf*.

"I read the script and I said, 'My God, I've never read such crap in my life!' My wife read it and said, 'It's horrible, but nobody'll see it, so go ahead and do it.'"

It was certainly fortunate that Fowler's wife encouraged him to take the job of directing *Teenage Werewolf*, even if her encouragement was based on a grossly mistaken prediction, because Fowler brought a skillful approach to the movie not often found in the many science fiction/horror pictures of that era. Fowler says, "I went around looking at all the various pictures of its kind playing around and I said, 'God, if I couldn't telephone in a better job than these I should turn my sneakers in. They were pretty juvenile."

Even though his movie was about a juvenile monster, Fowler set about making *Teenage Werewolf* in the most adult, thorough way possible. The first problem was the screenplay. "I did a lot of rewriting on the script, because they had the scientist as a black-hatted baddie; I had the idea that the bad guy shouldn't be evil as fas as he was concerned. He should be a very good, caring man who really wants to work for the good of humanity, it's simply the way he goes about it that's bad...I think you need to do that for any villian. Even Hitler was a wonderful guy as far as he was concerned, it's just what he did that was so horrible."

Sometimes producer Herman Cohen was reluctant to go along with some of the changes Fowler wanted to make, even if the changes were minor. Fowler says that he would make the changes anyway and Cohen would end up going along with it. Fowler recalls, "They had this scene with Michael Landon [the Teenage Werewolf] and his father. At the end Landon got sore, and that was the end of the scene. I said, 'You got to put a tag on the thing.' So I wanted him to do something violent. He was drinking a glass of milk, with the bottle on the table, and I wanted him to smash the bottle against the ice-box. Herman didn't think we needed that. I did it anyway. I brought a bottle of milk from home, it worked out fine and Herman liked it. Sometimes you just had to go ahead and do the damn thing.

"In the dialogue I wrote I tried to give the characters dimension, to show where they came from, instead of just moving them around and having them say the obligatory lines. I tried to give them a reason for these things. For instance, the milk bottle was not a big production thing or anything else; the only thing I was trying to do was give a demonstration of how screwed up this kid was. To show the kid's frustration I tried to cap the scene so that there was a meaning for the movement of the characters."

Any changes Fowler wanted to make were necessarily limited by the short schedule for *I Was a Teenage Werewolf*. The movie was shot in six days, which, as Fowler points out, doesn't give a director "a hell of a lot of experimental time. As a matter of fact, I shot it in five-and-a-half days because one day we were rained out for half a day." Working within this time limit and a budget of about $82,000 required a great deal of preplanning to make sure everything went smoothly. Finding the right people to work with was another factor. Fowler's years of service at 20th Century-Fox was helpful in his recruiting drive. One of the technicians he had become friendly with at the studio was noted cameraman Joseph La Shelle who had won an Academy Award for cinematography in 1944 for the classic mystery *Laura*. "I called him up one day," recalls Fowler, "and I said, 'Would you do a picture for me?' He asked what it was, and he was a little hesitant about it. I said, 'Come on for Crissakes. You'll work for six days and who the hell is ever to know it." Yet another dire prediction for one of the most successful exploitation films of the decade.

With La Shelle's assistance, Fowler was able to create an effectively moody look for the picture in the short time allotted him. Fowler's ideas on what *Teenage Werewolf* should look like was based, in part, on other movies being made at the time. "I looked at a *lot* of films of that ilk before I did *Werewolf*," says Fowler, "and I tried to avoid everything I saw because I thought they were just dreadful." A more positive influence was his experience on major studio productions. He points out, "I had been raised in the business with Fritz Lang, and he knew mood and he knew how to get it. I borrowed an awful lot from him. My art director on *Werewolf* was a wonderful guy by the name of Les Thomas and we were building sets out of spit and polish. We really cheated on sets. That's another thing I learned from Fritz, cheating on sets. Boy, if you use imagination, you can really build a set with spit and polish and get away with it. You know exactly what the hell you're going to shoot and you build only that much set. If you know the picture, there aren't a hell of a lot of cuts in it. I used mainly a moving camera and cut when I wanted impact."

Lessons learned from Fritz Lang figured importantly in all areas of the production. "Fritz was more or less my mentor," Fowler says. "He was very strong on horror and suspense; I learned a lot from him and put a lot of that in the movie, in the building of suspense, the building of horror, the juxtaposition of shots and how to put them together, rather than just throwing everything in. He taught me the use of the crane—that guy was a genius on that. He taught me not to use the equipment as toys and use them as tools. And the structuring of scenes, how you get shock values, that kind of thing, even though I never copied him slavishly because I had my own ideas on how to do that. He started around 1920 and he was responsible for a lot of the early ideas which were a little obvious and I tried to put a little more subtlety into it."

Another memorable facet of *I Was a Teenage Werewolf* was the low-budget wolfman makeup designed for Michael Landon by Phil Scheer. This makeup was horrific enough to cause a problem on the set during the filming of the fight between teenage werewolf and dog. "Because of the half day that was rained out," says Fowler, "we had to go back and pick up a couple of shots. I had a police dog that matched pretty well the dog

MARRIED A MONSTER PHOTOS: © 1958 PARAMOUNT

One of the aliens fights off an earthling dog in the finale of *I Married a Monster From Outer Space*, a project designed by Fowler to duplicate the surprising sucess of *I Was a Teenage Werewolf*.

we had used earlier. I brought him out onto the set—the sweetest dog in the world—and when Michael Landon showed up in makeup this dog took off for the hills. Scared the living hell out of her. It was a big thing even to try to get them to say hello to each other."

When *I Was a Teenage Werewolf* was released in 1957, the combination of the movie's teen-terror slant and Fowler's professionalism resulted in an unexpected resounding success that belied the director's initial misgivings about the project. This surprising development had to make Fowler wonder about his original negotiations with producer Cohen. The director remembers, "I was offered a piece of the picture before I started if I was to cut my price. I said, 'Give me the money,' because I figured I'd make about 40 dollars and it'd play for about two weeks."

Looking back on the film now, Fowler believes that *Teenage Werewolf* was instrumental in creating the horror-movie fad of the late 50's. He says, "Even though there was a bunch of these pictures being made—I know Roger Corman was making a bunch of the damn things—but at that time there didn't seem to be a very big market for them, they were very specialized showings. I guess they must have been spending just about the same amount of money that we were but their pictures were such sh*t. What I tried to do was take whatever problem I had, for example, as far as sets were concerned, and make it look like it really belonged in the picture rather than just having a flat with a door in it and saying this is the president's office. You had to make your sets say something too . . . I did not try to make just an exploitation picture. I was trying to do something with a little substance to it." Fowler feels that these efforts account for the strong cult following that *I Was a Teenage Werewolf* has attracted, a following that culminated in a screening of the movie in the Museum of Modern Art a few years ago.

Fowler's experience with *I Married a Monster From Outer Space*, which he produced as well as directed, was quite a bit different from his first horror feature. "I liked it when I was making it," he says, "as opposed to *Werewolf* which I really had no faith in."

Fowler collaborated on *Married a Monster* with a writer named Lou Vittes with whom he had worked before on the Charles Bronson Western *Showdown at Boot Hill*. "I was talking to him one time," Fowler recalls, "about my surprise at the success of *Teenage Werewolf*. So we started saying, 'Well, Christ, let's make an exploitation picture.' So we sat down and the both of us wrote this script and I came up with the title *I Married a Monster From Outer Space* because it was so exploitable. And we tried to make the best movie we could with this ridiculous title.

"There again, I tried to put characterization into the monster. The so-called monsters, the aliens, were very sad people. One of the things I've always found is that you've got to accept the premise, regardless of how ridiculous it is. If you accept the thing as very realistic and very honest, then you can come up with very honest performances and make a fairly honest picture out of it. And this premise was kind of sad: these guys, all of their women had died off, and they were searching the galaxy for women to propagate their race. They were desperate. That's how they came here and they were looking for these women. What they were doing, as far as they were concerned, was very honest and very necessary. The fact that they were kicking the sh*t out of the men here made no difference."

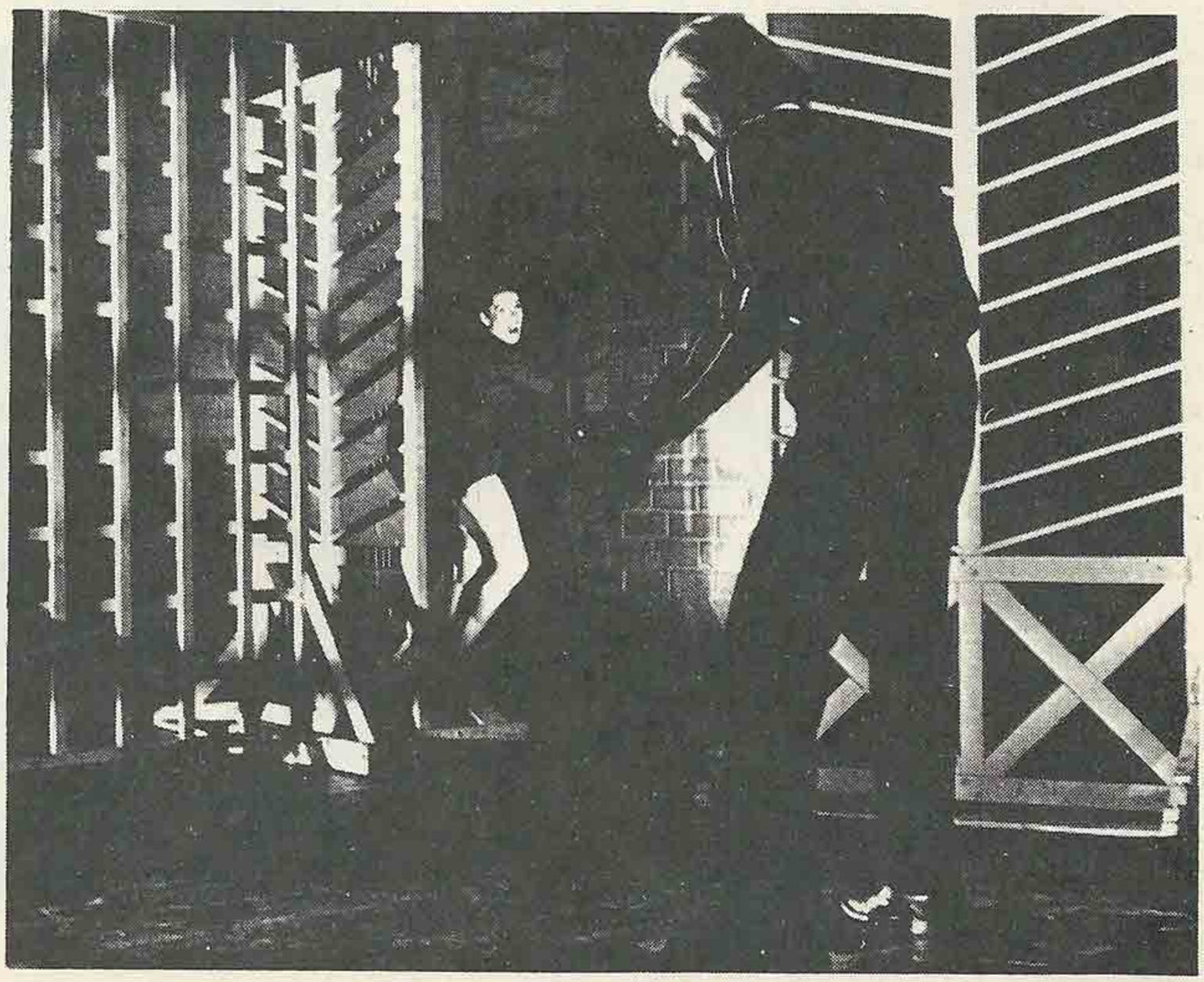
The movie opens at a stag party the night before Tom Tryon is going to be married. When he drives home along a lonely country road, he suddenly brakes the car in order to avoid hitting a body lying in his path. He jumps out of the car to find the body has disappeared, but finds a strange hand on his shoulder, a hand that belongs to a monstrous alien. Tryon is enshrouded in an inky black cloud and then vanishes when the cloud dissipates. The next morning Tryon's bride marries not a man, but an uncanny alien simulation. Fowler emphasizes that a crucial factor in creating the film's suspense was the way in which he and Vittes allowed the story to unfold. "You had to figure exactly the point at which you introduced the monster. You have to bring it up to a certain point, certain mysterious things have to happen, and then the introduction of the monster is very

brief, tremendously brief. Then you can go on without the audience knowing exactly what had happened, until the honeymoon night when the hero and heroine are about to make love; there's thunder and lightning, and suddenly the thunder hits close and you see just a flash of the monster superimposed over the hero's face. It all comes down to how you build these things up. You don't do it promiscuously, you do it with a hell of a lot of thought.

According to Fowler, he had a "long schedule" for the production of *I Married a Monster From Outer Space*—eight days to be exact. The budget was also somewhat larger than that for *Teenage Werewolf*, a grand total of $175,000, but, as Fowler points out, this increase wasn't terribly significant because he was "also going through Paramount and they dipped into that a little bit with their overhead." In light of these limited resources, the effects in *Married a Monster* are very impressive. Those watching the final scene in particular for the first time today will be especially impressed with the destruction of the aliens. Dogs jump at the heads of the monsters and tear away the monsters' air tubes which causes the creatures to collapse into a gurgling, gelatinous heap; fairly strong stuff for 1958 that stands up well today. Fowler says that all of these effects were done on the set, using very common household items. "For the dissolving of the monster at the end," he says, "my wife made me about five gallons of jello which I did the scene with. In other words I was pretty much my own effects man." The optical effects used to create the electric aura that surrounds the monsters was supervised by the great veteran John Fulton, the man who gave you such classics as *The Invisible Man* and *The Wolf Man*.

After making *I Was a Teenage Werewolf* and *I Married a Monster From Outer Space*, Fowler went on to direct such pictures as *Gang War* and *Oregon Trail*, and episodes of successful TV series like *Rawhide*, *Gunsmoke* and *Perry Mason*. He has never returned to the horror genre, but *Teenage Werewolf* and *Married a Monster* are still being viewed today on TV, in revival houses, and, in the case of the latter, on videocassette. By putting horror in a commonplace setting, whether it be a high school or a suburban living room, he fashioned a kind of terror picture that represents the best of 50's exploitation. "This is based on a lot of conversations I had with Fritz Lang," says Fowler. "If you go into a castle, and there's thunder and lightning, and you open the door—it squeaks like hell—you walk up a squeaking set of stairs, and bats are flying around—you *expect* to see a crazy with an axe or a monster. I think the real terror would be if you walk into your own living room and something like that happens; putting it in an everyday setting is much more effective."

The aliens on the march. The makeup for *I Married a Monster From Outer* was supervised by Wally Westmore.



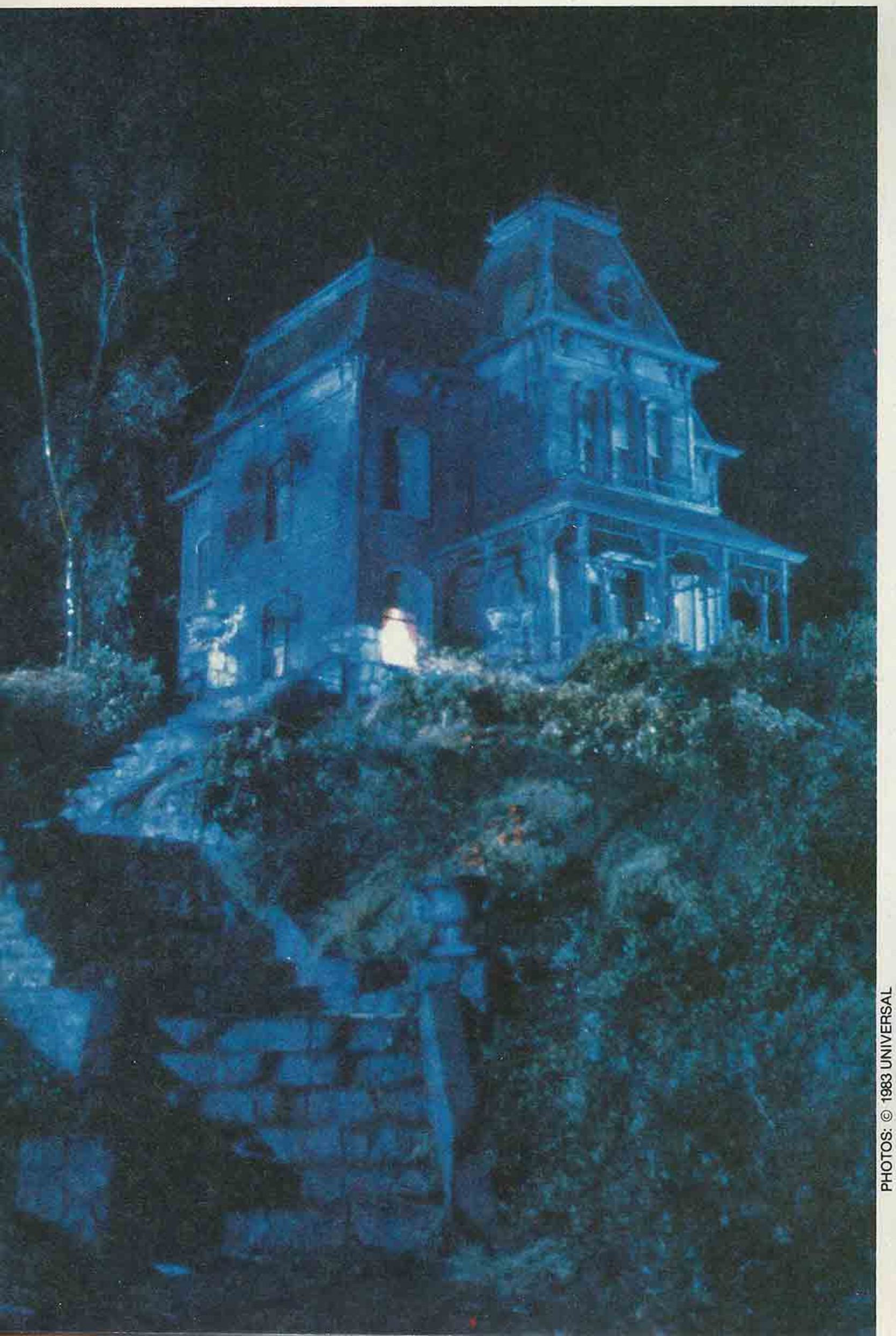
Landon, as the Teenage Werewolf, stalks a toothsome gymnast after the school bell triggers his monstrous transformation.

Directing

PSYCHO II

Australian Director Richard Franklin on the Challenge of Following in Hitchcock's Footsteps

By David Everitt



Psycho II faces perhaps the toughest critical standard encountered by any recent thriller. There aren't many fright films that are universally accepted as masterpieces, and, among that elite handful, Hitchcock's *Psycho* stands out. Twenty-three years after the film's original release, Australian director Richard Franklin has made a sequel that is going to have to stand up to the exacting tastes of the many devotees of the Master of Suspense.

Franklin, although he is not well known in this country, seems to be well qualified to take on this tricky task. He comes across as very articulate, intelligent and conscientious, and, as he has shown in his direction of the Jamie Lee Curtis suspense picture *Road Games,* he cares about perpetuating the best qualities of Hitchcock's movies without aping the grand master's technique.

Franklin began his professional filmmaking career in Australia as an assistant cameraman for a television-commercial company. He then relocated to California to study film at U.S.C. and returned to his native country to make his debut as a director on Australian television. Fangorians may know him best for his Australian-made psychic horror picture *Patrick*, although American readers were subjected to what many people considered to be a poorly dubbed print and really didn't get to see the movie in the form in which it was intended to be seen. Significantly, the original Australian version of the film was honored with a Science Fiction Academy Award.

Franklin is devoted enough to the thriller genre to develop more projects along these lines for the future, but he says he is interested in making other types of pictures as well. He says that what he likes most in films are "larger-than-life qualities, things that are a little fantastic, out of the ordinary." One of his favorite quotes from Hitchcock is, "some people's films are slices of life, my films are slices of cake."

PHOTOS: © 1983 UNIVERSAL

The house of Norman Bates holds more suspense and horror in Richard Franklin's *Psycho* sequel.

Fang: Your last picture was a Hitchcock-style suspense movie, *Road Games*, and now you have directed the sequel to *Psycho*. Would Hitchcock happen to be a favorite of yours?

Franklin: Oh, absolutely. I guess he was the person who got me interested in becoming a director, that is, looking at his films when I was a young kid in Australia made me want to become a director. In fact, *Psycho* was the first one of his films that I saw, in its original release when I was 12. When I enrolled as a student at U.S.C. in 1967, I suggested that we do a retrospective of Hitchcock films, mainly because there were a few that I hadn't seen or hadn't seen in color because television in Australia was still black and white in those days. In the course of getting permission to show *Rope*, I had to contact Hitchcock's office and I invited him to come down to talk to us, and he did. So I was fortunate enough to meet him then, and to subsequently be invited by him out onto the set of *Topaz* which was the film he was working on at the time. I watched him at work and looked at his storyboards and his scripts and got some ideas about the approach he took to directing. I then consolidated that by studying his films in subsequent years. In 1970 I went back to Australia and started directing a television series down there which was sort of a cops-and-robbers show called *Homicide*. It was a top-rated television program down there; every show started with a murder and ended with a car chase, so I had a chance to try out the various things that I learned from him.

Tony Perkins as Norman Bates: the "lit fuse" that supplies the suspense in *Psycho II*.

Director Franklin (on right) at work on the set, determined to be true to the spirit of Hitchcock.

Fang: So you got to know him personally?

Franklin: Yes, though I would say I knew him professionally. He was a hard man to get to know personally. He was very personable, but then again he was very private.

Fang: What would you say intrigued you most about Hitchcock's movies?

Franklin: The fact that they were more emotionally exciting than just about any other filmmaker's movies; one could count on a sort of adrenalin buzz every time one went to see one of his movies. It appeared to be something magical to me when I was a kid, as I guess it did to everybody. Now I feel I have some insight into how he did what he did. The interesting thing about him was that he was very eager to share his secrets, because he didn't see them as secrets; he thought that the way he made films was the way everybody should make films.

Fang: You were at U.S.C. at the same time that John Carpenter was there, weren't you?

Franklin: Yes, I was. I was slightly ahead of John Carpenter and slightly behind George Lucas. It was that "golden era" I guess they now call it. It was an extraordinary time. I would say that the Hitchcock retrospective that we ran in 1967 was very much a part of that whole thing. We were eager to rediscover the golden age of Hollywood and the way the great Hollywood filmmakers made films. At the time the bias in the course was very heavily towards European films. In fact, I remember vividly once in a directing class we were being shown a sequence from *A*

Hard Day's Night—certainly an excellent piece of cinema verite—and I made some comment about why didn't we ever study American films in the class. The lecturer said, "Oh, you're the fellow who's bringing all these tired old hacks like Hitchcock and Ford down to talk to the students, aren't you?" [laughs] So, it was a strange era. I think a lot of what's happened in movies recently has to do with the fact that we were sort of reactionary, that we were reacting to the direction that Hollywood was going at the time. We wanted to go back to good narrative filmmaking, and Hollywood was trying to imitate some of the European films of the period.

Fang: That reminds me of what Byron Kennedy said to me when I spoke to him about *Road Warrior*. He said that in Australia there seems to be a great emphasis on European-style filmmaking and that he and George Miller are sort of a minority.

Franklin: That's absolutely true. I sort of went out of the frying pan and into the fire when I came back to Australia. I had just left Hollywood where I was trying to convince people that commercial didn't mean bad. And I suddenly found myself in Australia where the government attitude was one of fostering an elitest cinema, something that would appeal to the critics and the art houses and film festivals of the world, which is probably good for Australia's p.r., but it hasn't necesarily led to a lot of successful films being made.

Fang: Was *Patrick* your first feature?

Franklin: No, I did a picture before that that was called *The True Story of Eskimo Nell*. It was sort of an epic Western set on the Australian gold fields; perhaps it would be better to describe it as a comic Western—it was an epic in terms of what we tried to do. It really hasn't been shown in America mainly because it was a film that really asserted Australian colloquialisms, and frankly I don't think Americans would understand the language. It would be something like me listening to a film done in Midwestern or Southern slang.

Fang: That's interesting in light of the fact that *Patrick* seems to have been hampered in its American release by poor dubbing.

Franklin: That was particularly painful to me because, after the experience of *Eskimo Nell*, I decided, "Well, obviously it doesn't work to make films that are fiercely nationalistic, even though that's something that we can do uniquely well—it's not something that communicates to a broader audience. So when I set out to do *Patrick*, I remember vividly being told by another Australian filmmaker of some prominence that I was out of my mind to tackle something that was so international, that I was very foolish to try to compete with American movies on their own terms. As far as the approach to language we took, I really tried to do the whole thing in what we call Queens English; I guess that's what you call it too—I don't mean Queens, N.Y., I mean as in the Queen of England. I had a cast of English actors and Australian expatriates who lived in Britain, and we made a point of doing the whole thing in a very correct language which I thought would be the most international form of English. The later dubbing was very unfortunate because we probably made only one error in the whole picture, which was that we called an elevator a lift. But the American distributor said, "We're going to redub the movie," and just went right ahead. Then we screened the film in 1979 at Filmex in its original form and the audience loved it, so they obviously had no trouble with the language. But at that point the distributor had already spent the money on dubbing it and he wouldn't back down.

Fang: When you took on *Psycho II*, were you apprehensive about following in Hitchcock's footsteps?

Franklin: Absolutely. It's a terrifying prospect. But, on the other hand, I was very eager to do a picture here, and I felt I knew Hitchcock's work as well as anyone and if anyone was going to do *Psycho II* I'd like to see it done well. Perhaps in a couple of films' time I might have thought twice, because I can almost hear the critics sharpening their knives now. It's tough. When Jerry Goldsmith agreed to do the score, I said, "Gee, I admire your courage, Jerry." And he said, "Why? Why is it any different than what you're doing?" I said, "Well, basically, as I'm an unknown here, I can afford to be compared to Hitchcock, but why did you need to put your head on the chopping block and be compared to Bernard Herrmann?"

Fang: When I interviewed Tony Perkins, he told me you were picked to direct *Pscyho II* because you could capture the spirit of Hitchcock without copying him.

Franklin: Well, I certainly didn't set out to copy him. To copy would be to lift, that is, to say, "Let's do this thing from this picture or that thing from that picture and work out how to put that all together into one film." I have seen other filmmakers do that, actually pay homage by copying sequences of shots from Hitchcock. I didn't set out to do that, because Hitchcock never did that. He never used the same sequence of shots in two films running, unless it served the story. So what I tried to do was think, "Now, how might he have gone about telling the story, how would he have constructed this story in visual terms?" rather than borrowing from sequences he had already done. Of course, in the case of *Psycho*, we were working on the same locations, and the previous film was like a manual of possible camera angles, some of which we used and some of which we departed from.

Fang: Do you do a lot of storyboarding and pre-planning the way Hitchcock did?

Franklin: Yes, I do that quite extensively. On my first picture I didn't. I took more of a John Ford approach, perhaps more of a Roman Polanski approach, which was one of trying to get the chemistry going on the set and then capturing it on film. For whatever reasons, that film didn't work as well, so when I came to do *Patrick* I decided, "Well, I'll do what Mr. Hitchcock taught me to do," and I basically planned the film in the same way that he used to.

Fang: What is the nature of the horrific elements in *Psycho II*?

Franklin: I don't classify *Psycho* as a horror

Vera Miles (cast once again as the sister of the murdered Janet Leigh) protests the release of her sister's killer. On the left, Robert Loggia plays the doctor who believes Norman is fit to re-enter society.

film, at least not as a pure horror film; it certainly is the closest thing to a horror film that Hitchcock ever made, but then Hitchcock didn't make horror movies. I see *Psycho* as a sort of hybrid of—certainly horror—but also gothic melodrama, black comedy, a mystery to some extent, and basic Hitchcockian suspense thriller. Hitchcock's favorite story to illustrate suspense was one of a bomb under a table with its fuse lit and how one would keep cross-cutting between that and the people talking innocuously. That was suspense. But when the bomb went off, that was just violence. I would say that Norman Bates in *Psycho II* is basically like a bomb with the fuse lit. . . The most important thing to me on this picture was to realize the tone of *Psycho*. I felt if we did that, everything else would fall into place. And I believe we achieved that tone, or its tonal equivalent.

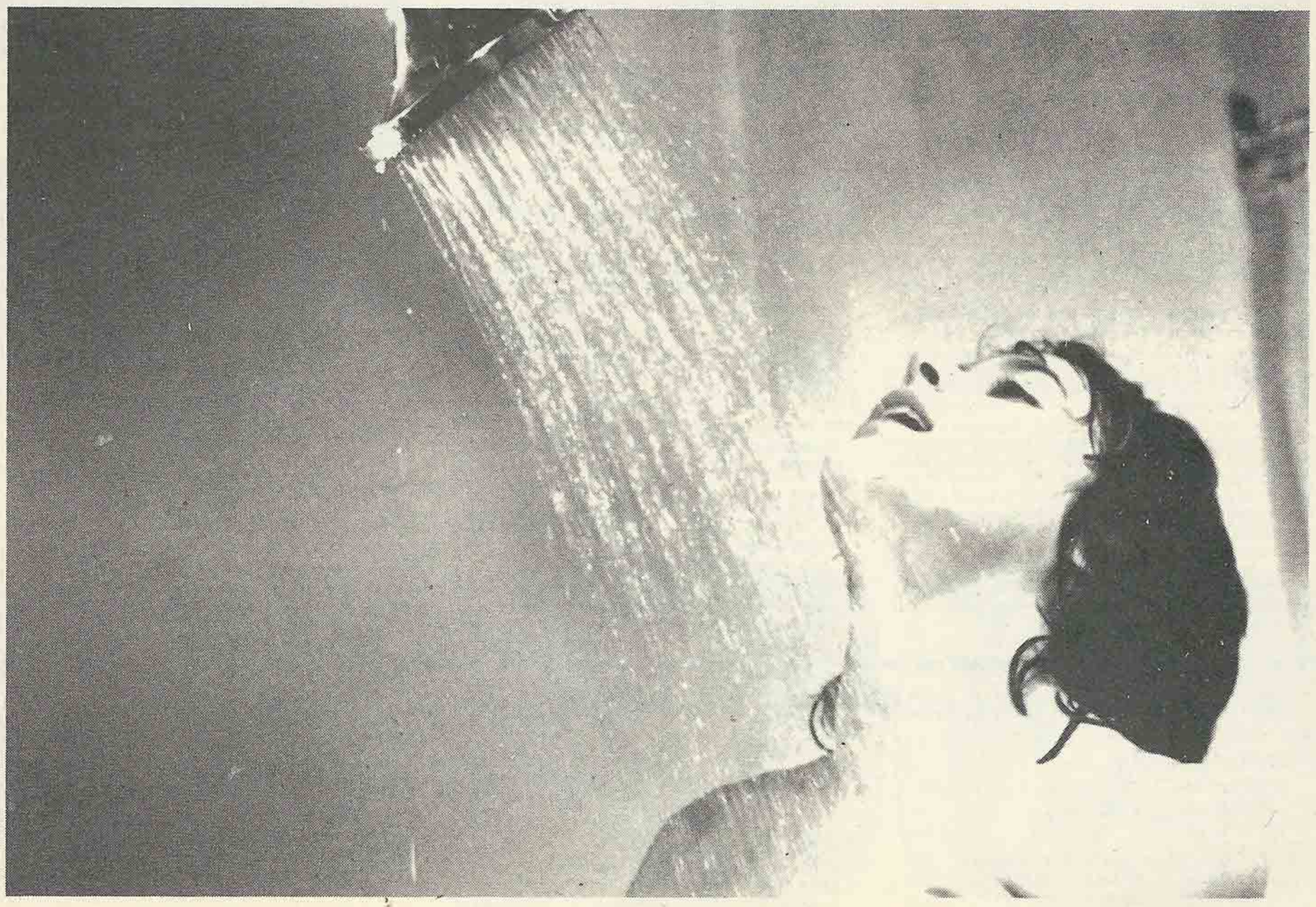
Fang: Were there any special problems for you to solve during the production of *Psycho II*?

Franklin: Probably the biggest problem was the direction the genre has taken recently, since there have been so many slasher movies in the past few years. I frankly believe that *Psycho* didn't start that genre; I think the slasher genre really started with *Halloween*, the recent wave, that is. And *Halloween* is a monster movie—the killer is described that way by his doctor. Norman Bates was never a monster. That's what I think distinguishes *Psycho* from all those other films. So the problem for *Psycho II* was that the genre had changed so much as a result of these recent films that were thought to be in the genre of *Psycho*; we had to be true not just to what *Psycho* is, or to what *Psycho* was in 1960, because it was very much a sociological phenomenon, but we also had to be true to the way people misremembered *Psycho*; so the problem was threefold. Finding that tonal quality was immensely difficult, because we were dealing with something that existed more in people's minds than even on the screen. Dr. Donald Spoto screened *Psycho* at the American Film Institute and I went to the screening to watch it with an audience just before we started shooting. I walked out and waited in the corridor after the picture had been on for 10 minutes and went back in later for Dr. Spoto's lecture because the audience was laughing so much. Now they were laughing at the black comedy and in-jokes which they appreciated I guess because they'd had 20 years for the actual visceral impact of the film to die down somewhat; I certainly don't remember audiences laughing in 1960. I didn't want to make a film that was full of in-jokes, so I skipped watching the film with that particular audience and tended to rely on my own memories of the film from when I was 12.

Fang: Now that they've been inundated with slasher movies, how do you think people will receive a continuation of the so-called prototype for these movies?

Franklin: This comes down to that threefold problem I mentioned earlier. Some people remember *Psycho* as extremely restrained and tastefully done, and yet, if you read the *New York Times* letters to the editor at the time it was first released, there was a large number of people who thought the film was an absolute travesty of good taste and that Alfred Hitchcock had gone beyond the pale. In 1960, *Psycho* was pushing the bounds of censorship as far as it could. By modern standards it appears to be very restrained, and its restraint was very much a function of censorship. I suspect that the shower murder scene was shot the way it was more because of the nudity than the violence. It was impossible to show a nude woman at that time, particularly when you add violence, in that she's being stabbed and there's nothing to conceal the stabbing. It was a *tour de force*, not just of film technique, but of getting around the censor. Our problem nowadays is that, to be a true sequel, we have to do some things that an audience would be shocked by and do other things that were carried off with style and restraint. I hope it will please people who remember *Psycho* in both ways, that is, I hope the kids who go along expecting to see a lot of Grand Guignol will not be disappointed, but at the same time I couldn't risk offending the people who now remember it as restrained. It was extremely difficult. I would hope that what will happen is that there'll be a little bit of controversy about whether the film is restrained or not. If we achieve that, then we will have achieved exactly the same reaction that the original had.

Meg Tilly in a revamped shower scene. Will she fare any better than Janet Leigh in the original?



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6 - *Friday the 13th!*; Shock FX of Bottin and Savini; King-Romero team-up!; Vincent Price; Tons more!

7 - Caroline Munro + Tom Savini = *Maniac!; The Shining* previewed; Chris Walas; *Captain Kronos, Vampire Hunter*; Incredibly More!

8 - The Carpenter Interview; *Horror of Dracula* FX; *Fade To Black*; Jim Danforth & Dave Allen; Italian shocker *Zombie*; Still more!

11 - Bottin and *The Howling; My Bloody Valentine;* Hooper's *Funhouse;* Boorman on *Excalibur;* Terence Fisher; A Great Deal More!

12 - The Tobe Hooper Interview; *Friday the 13th Part 2; The Hand;* Romero's *Knightriders;* William Csatle; Mother of Mercy, More!

13 - Landis on *American Werewolf;* The Romero Interview; sexy P.J. Soles; On Set: *The Beast Within*; Fullerton's *F13-2* FX; *Wolfen*; Oy! More!

14 - Rick Baker and *An American Werewolf;* Carpenter on *Halloween II;* FX Special with Savini, Burman, Winston, Walas and Harryhausen—surprise!—More!

15 - The Jamie Lee Curtis Interview; Debra Hill and *Halloween II;* Burman continued; O'Brien on *Shock Treatment; Swamp Thing;* Buckets! More!

16 - Henenlotter's *Basket Case;* Dick Smith pt. 1; Chris Tucker's *Elephant Man* makeup; Peter Straub and *Ghost Story;* Basker's EFX Sutios; Gaaah! More!

17 - The Wes Craven Interview; Dick Smith and *Ghost Story;* Beautiful Fiona Lewis; Gorey H.G. Lewis; Sam Fuller's *White Dog;* screenwriter Alan Ormsby; Nyong-nyong-nyong—more!

18 - Burman on *Cat People* and *The Beast Within;* On Set: Carpeter's *The Thing*, Romero's *Creepshow;* Allison Hayes; Gollygoshwow, More!

19 - Byron Kennedy on *The Road Warrior;* Cronenberg, Carpenter, Landis panel discussion; The Dick Miller Interview; *Poltergeist;* Holy Moly! More!

20 - The Joe Dante Interview; Carpenter on *The Thing;* Landis, Carpenter, Cronenberg 2; Horror + Wrestling = WOW!; Milligan's (Staten) Island; Crom! More!

21 - Craig Reardon and *Poltergeist;* Bottin and *The Thing;* Miner on *Friday the 13th Pt 2; Sword and the Sorceror;* Zacherle!; Yipes—More!

22 - Romero on *Creepshow; Halloween III;* Ingrid Pitt; Doug White on *F13-3* FX; Legendary Tor Johnson; Corscarelli's *Besatmsater*; (Gasp!) More!

23 - Hooper on *Poltergeist* and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre;* Sa, Raimi's *Evil dead; Halloween III* FX; Curtis *(Queen of Blood)* Harrington; and (I can't take it!) More!

24 - ILM's *Poltergeist* FX; Larry Cohen's *Q*; Ackermonster's FM Sayonara; *The Sender; XTRO;* Bloodfarming with Ed Kelleher; and (you'll take it and like it) More!

25 - Cronenberg on *Videodrome;* Savini after *Creepshow;* McGavin on *Kolchak; Alone in the Dark;* Streiber on *The Hunger;* Caramba! More!

26 - Smith's *Hunger* FX; Gorgeous Tanya Roberts; FX of Caglione, Munns, Beswick; Michael *(Mark of the Devil)* Armstrong; Ted *(Corpse Grinders)* Mikels; And (by Popular Demand!) More!

27 - "Gore and Me" by Savini!; Tony Perkins interviewed; Forry on Chaney; *Evil dead* FX; Pete *(Flesh and Blood Show)* Walker; Ray Bradbury; And a plethora of More!

28 - *Psycho II* director Franklin; FX of Smith, Fullerton and Buechler; Uncle Bob flips out on the *Dead Zone* set; The Incredibly Strange Ray Dennis Steckler; And (what a concept) More!

29 - George *(Road Warrior)* Miller and Dick Miller on *Twilight Zone;* Cronenberg on *Dead Zone;* Joe Alves on *Jaws 3-D;* H.G. Lewis book exerpt; Bloody Ghastly Horror of Sam Sherman; Lucio Fulci interviewed; More (a real glut)!

30 Debra Hill and *Dead Zone;* Laurel's TV Halloween Treat; Chainsaw mayhem in *Pieces;* Matheson on *TZ* and *Jaws 3-D;* Don *(Psychomania)* Sharp; Richard E. Cunha; The Fango Index; Bountifully More!

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DR. CYCLOPS Extra

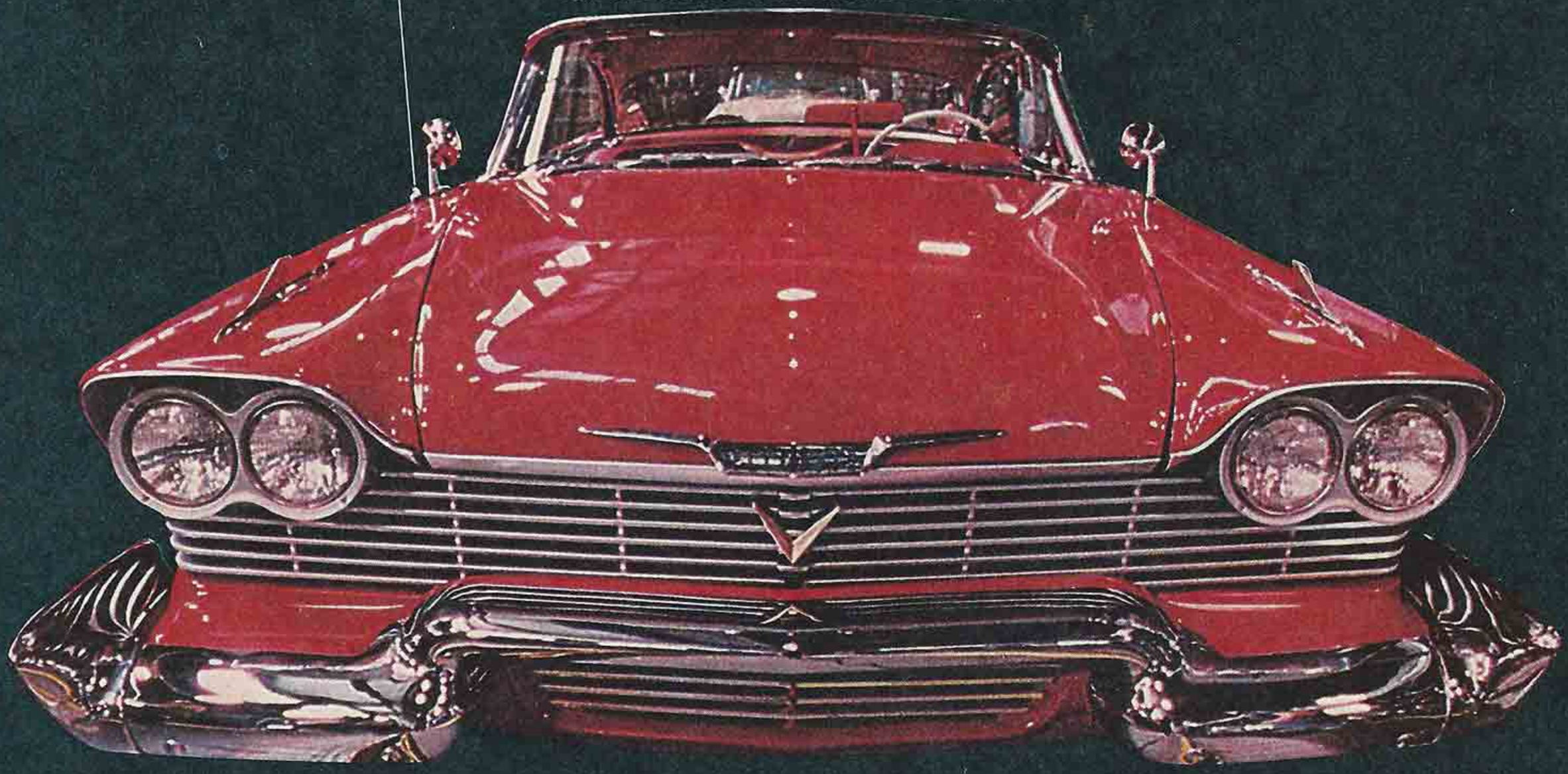
BASKET CASE (MEDIA HOME ENTERTAINMENT): The last time I devoted a full page to a video release, it was *Blood Feast*, the first H.G. Lewis film to enter the home market. It's therefore appropriate that we should similiarly honor the first feature of Frank Henenlotter, which is itself dedicated to the godfather of gore.

Twisted comedy? Splatter movie? Hennenlotter's answer to the Hilton Sisters? Scathing satirical comment on man's inhumanity to misshapen lump of flesh? *Basket Case* has been called all of that, and more. The plot itself indicates that the writer-director's head is not threaded in quite the same way that yours and mine are. Duane and Belial are Siamese twins: one healthy in appearance, while the other resembles a well-used kneaded eraser. Their mother was fortunate enough to die in childbirth, but Dad can't stand the sight of the little twisted Beliah and arranges for the twins' separation by the knife. Beliah, who was "attached" to his sibling in more ways than one, doesn't take kindly to such treatment, and sets off on a vengeance trail.

A case could be made for this film as a Freudian metaphor, with Beliah as the raging id, acting out every murderous desire (even engaging in patricide!), and Duane as the suffering superego, striving for control—or vice versa. But such an exercise would be better suited to a higher-toned film journal—if all of them hadn't chosen to ignore this gem (but then it took them several years to see anything in Romero).

For those of us who just like to sit back and enjoy a nice, twisted, and very *wet* splatter movie—one that also has a story, I might add—*Basket* Case reminds me of what they used to say about Lucky Strikes: it satisfies!

Richard Kobritz and



CHRISTINE

The man who brought John Carpenter and Tobe Hooper to television invites you along for a Hell-bound joyride!

By R.H. Martin

PHOTOS: KIM GOTTLEIB © 1983 POLAR FILM CORP.

If the ease with which the elements of a film project come together are any indication of the movie's prospects for success, then it seems likely that John Carpenter's *Christine* will be a blockbuster. When producer Richard Kobritz first secured film rights, there was no "master strategy" that called for the film to open within nine months of the King novel's first appearance in hardcover; but the felicitous marriage of people and resources that Kobritz has engineered will, in all likelihood, have the film in theaters while the book is still riding high on the hardcover bestseller lists.

Our readers first encountered Kobritz some time ago, on the set of *'Salem's Lot* (issue –4). On this occasion, though Kobritz was deeply involved in the details of post-production, we had the chance for a more leisurely talk, discussing Kobritz's exceptional career in television, as well as his newest project.

Asked if there was any film image that first sparked his love for the medium, Kobritz is quick with his reply: "Richard Widmark pushing the old lady down the stairs in *Kiss of Death*. I think it affected me as much as it did because it was done visually, with no dialogue whatsoever. And it was a scene of incredible power; something beyond anything I could imagine, in my six or seven-year-old mind, back in 1948."

A San Francisco native, Kobritz attended Santa Clara University and received his Master's degree in communications from San Francisco State. His rise through the ranks of the filmmaking industry was a fairly rapid one, from assistant director to production supervisor to associate producer, working on such diverse films as *Hello Dolly, Caprice* and *The Cheyenne Social Club*. In 1975, Kobritz secured an executive position, serving as senior vice president of production for Warner Brothers television.

Kobritz was, in several ways, an unusual television executive. At the time, Warner Brothers' TV division was emerging from a long period of inactivity, dating back to the death of their private eye and Western series that dominated the early 60's. The mid-70's success of series like *Dukes of Hazzard* and *Alice* left Warner sufficiently in need of Kobritz's talents that he was able to request, and receive, a unique clause in his contract allowing him to occasionally step down from his executive post in order to produce films. One of the reasons that Kobritz's position was so unique is that few television execs would actually choose to take on the additional daily headaches of a television movie production schedule. "Part of it was to set an example," Kobritz explains. "That is, if I could do it properly and within budget, then why couldn't the people who worked for us?"

Even more unusual were the sort of projects Kobritz chose to produce. *Somebody's Watching Me* starred Lauren Hutton and Adrienne Barbeau in the story of a woman stalked by an unseen psychopath—made well before that idea had been run into the ground. The second Kobritz telefilm was perhaps the most ambitious horror project ever mounted for television, a mini-series based on Stephen King's novel *'Salem's Lot*. In both instances, Kobritz chose to bank the studio's money on young directors who were brand new to television, and virtually unknown outside the narrow realm of horror film afficionados—John Carpenter, for *Somebody's Watching me* [Romance fans: it was on this picture that Carpenter met and fell in love with Adrienne Barbeau], and Tobe Hooper for the mini-series *'Salem's Lot*. TV horror is an exception itself; Kobritz's two telefilms were even more exceptional, as instances wherein horror actually *worked* on television.

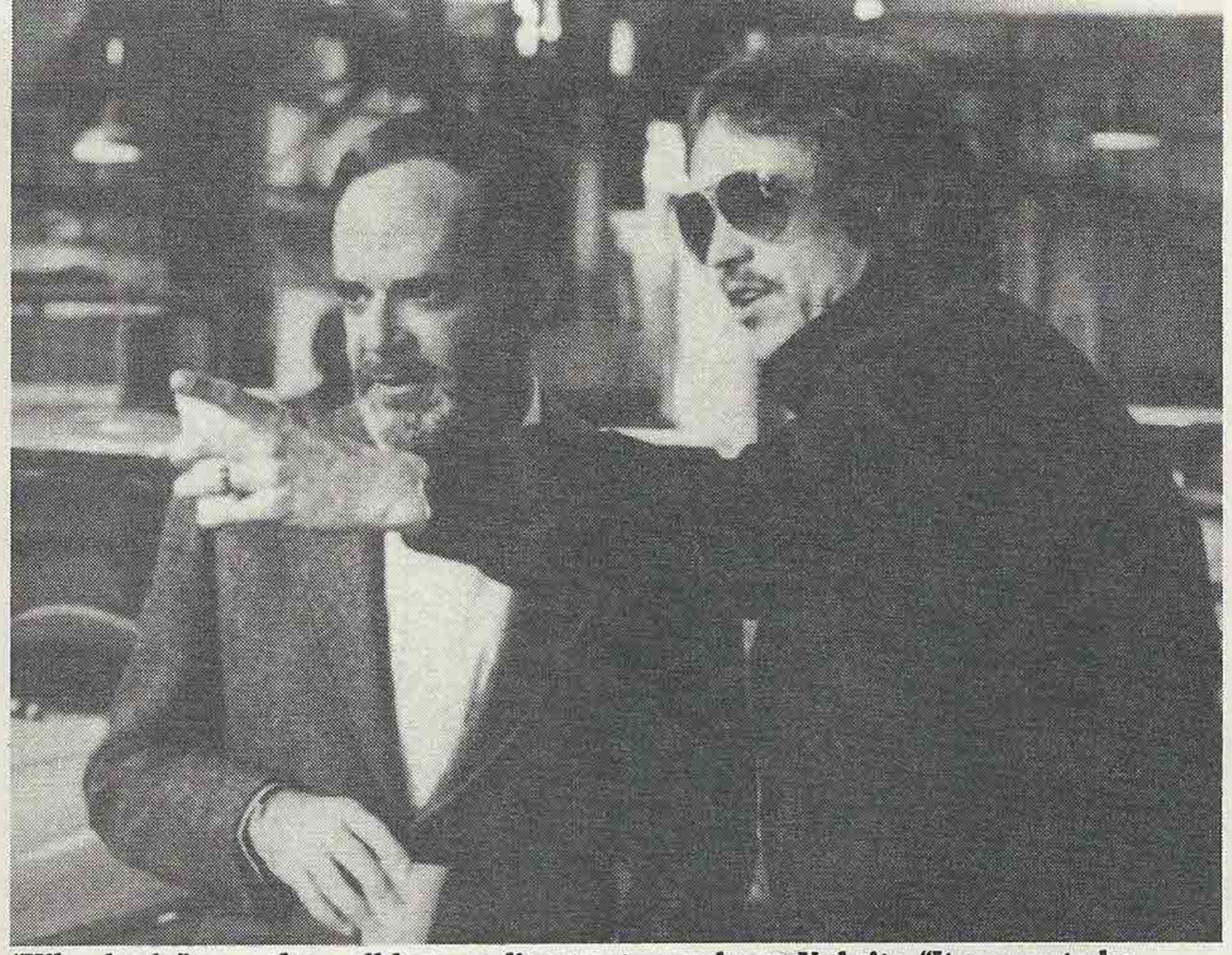
Harry Dean Stanton plays Junkins, a detective hot on the trail of a hit-and-run murderer.

Kobritz agrees that TV and horror seldom mix well. "There are several reasons why they often don't come out correctly," he says. "That includes censorship; and commercial breaks are a *killer*. When you have seven commercial breaks in the course of a two-hour movie, that does absolute violence to any attempt to sustain suspense, mood or any of several aspects that are particularly germaine to the thriller genre.

"On both of those films, we tried to render both screenplays in visual terms. We tried to keep dialogue to a minimum, and tried to have the scenes involving the psychopathic killer, or the vampires, done with *no* dialogue wherever possible.

On the *'Salem's Lot* set, Kobritz checks that Barlo (Reggie Nalder) is securely staked.

PHOTOS: COURTESY RICHARD KOBRITZ



"Why, look," says the well-known director to producer Kobritz. "It seems to be the left edge of page 16!"

"Another thing that John and I agreed on with the first film, and that, later, Tobe and I also agreed upon, was that we would never use a zoom lens. Television *lives* on the zoom, because it is such a timesaver—the camera just zooms in and out. We only used hard lenses, so when we wanted to move into a close-up, we would physically dolly in. It takes more preparation time, but there's a difference in texture, in feeling; it's real movement, as opposed to movement within the lens."

Kobritz's greatest difficulty as a TV producer was convincing the networks that taking "creative risks" would not necessarily result in a nation-wide orgy of dial-turning. "The network is always a problem; they're playing with demographics, they're playing with safety. They want to deal, at all times, with proven entities. I think the very fact that we could talk them into a John Carpenter, who was then virtually unknown, not even a member of the Director's Guild, or Tobe Hooper, who at the time was known only for *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, was half the battle; after I'd gotten over that hurdle, the rest was pretty easy."

The full-length version of *'Salem's Lot* is not likely to be broadcast again; the existence of a standard-length film version, which just glosses the surface of the material, provides programmers with a more convenient option. We wondered whether Kobritz felt a twinge of pain on hearing that he was obliged to produce such a condensed version. "Yeah, of course I did," he replies. "The theatrical version came to be simply because they had wanted such a version, and it could only be 110 minutes, no more, no less. It couldn't be 112, not 108—and it becomes like cutting sausage, you know? Buying it by the pound. It was designed as a four-hour mini-series. There's no way you can cut it down to 110 minutes and have an acceptable movie. The three-hour version was acceptable to me — in fact I kind of liked it. That moves by very quickly, it's long enough to let you know everybody, and it's intensified because you see it in one sitting. I realize now how important that is; it's very tough to do a horror mini-series where you're saying, here's half the story, and then you cut it off—come back tomorrow night. They didn't even do that, they put us on two successive Saturdays, which was absolutely ludicrous."

A warm relationship developed between the producer and the novelist in the course of the production of *'Salem's Lot*. "In the years since," says Kobritz, "King and I had talked several times about doing something together; he sent me manuscripts on several of his books that were subsequently published, but none of them were, personally speaking, special enough. Along about July fourth of last year, I received a manuscript called *Christine*, which I read over a three-day period.

"It was one of those books that you just know, regardless of who the author is, that it's going to be a bestseller, and that, whether or not it's right for you, it will be made into a movie. This one just seemed very, very special to me. It was teenagers, it was rock'n'roll, it was taking America's love affair with the automobile and turning that into a horror story. King has a great ability to render familiar objects scary, and when he can do that with a car, that's special. And it was a fun book, as opposed to *The Shining*, which is the serious side of King...it just seemed right."

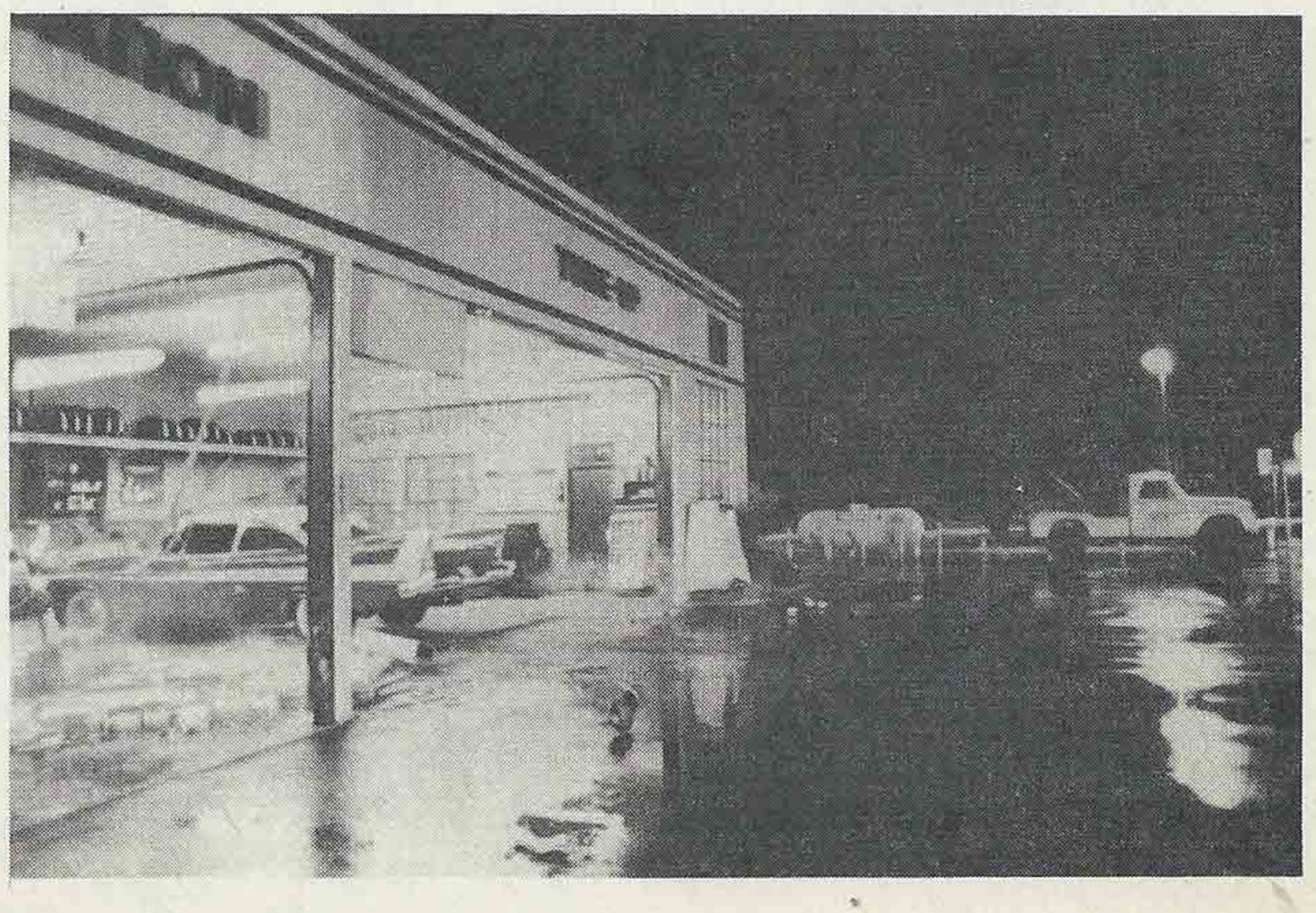
Upon deciding that the book was right for him Kobritz also decided to leave the Warner Brothers nest, to become an independent producer. "I felt sure that I couldn't get the same kind of deal or the same kind of autonomy if I took it to Warners," Kobritz says, "where they might feel in some way responsible for me; 'Look kid, we made you, and now we're giving you a shot,' that sort of thing."

An early obstacle to *Christine*'s speedy production seemed to be the commitment of Kobritz's first-choice director. John Carpenter was committed to Universal's King adaptation *Firestarter* at that time, and a non-horror film, *The Ninja*, from the *Jaws* producers, Zanuck and Brown. But delays in production on both of those epics paved the road for *Christine*.

"Bill Phillips was John Carpenter's choice for screenwriter," says Kobritz. "John had worked with him previously, liked him, and felt that he had a very good feeling for character. He's worked out wonderfully. We met from about September through December of last year, at different times, in my office, and we turned in the finished screenplay in January of this year."

As he's demonstrated with his previous King adaptation, Kobritz places a high priority on maintaining the spirit of the

The title character engages in a destructo-spree at the local filling station.



novelist's creations; but novels and screenplays will always be two different species. "First of all," Kobritz explains, "you're trying to translate 550 pages of a novel into a 120 page screenplay. So you want to stay with your lead characters: Arnie, Dennis and Leigh. Some of the side stories have to be dropped—there just isn't the time to go into them. And King admitted that he had straddled the fence on once very important point—is the car, in and of itself, evil? Or was it infected by the evil of its previous owner? Early on, that question came up in a story conference, and I called King, who said that he'd straddled it, and that we could take it either way. For the purposes of a film, we felt that we were obliged to confront that point directly; and we thought it would be more fun to make the car evil—something *born* bad."

To illustrate the point, the birth of Christine, and some immediate unpleasantness, is portrayed in the film's initial scenes. "That was something that right away we all agreed on," Kobritz says. "Something to show straight on that, from the very beginning, something was wrong with this car. Months later, King mentioned a comic essay by James Thurber that he'd read about objects that had simply been born bad—like a can opener that was just meant to cut your finger. In a sense that's what we're saying about this car; it's not the ghost of its dead owner, it's not a skeleton rattling in the back seat. I's just that the car has a way of adopting weak people, capturing their minds and giving them a sense of security and a sense of power. In exchange, it rules the owner."

With screenplay in hand and director on tap, the search for the title character commenced. For three months, from February to April of this year, Kobritz's staff combed the nation, working through car clubs and state departments of motor vehicles, to find 1958 Plymouths. "We located about 25 cars, which they were able to cull down to about 17; some of those were just bought for parts, so we came down to about 14 different cars that were used to do various different things. We had a shop going throughout production, repairing damaged cars, and renewing the junkers. Of course, a good many of these were totally destroyed during filming, far beyond any hope of repair. When we finish postproduction, we expect to have two cars left intact, which will go to Columbia for publicity use."

Roland LeBay (Robert Blossom, who played an Ed Gein-type in Alan Ormsby's Deranged) prepares to hand the keys to Hell over to a young car enthusiast.

The effects work to which Kobritz refers is the extraordinary task of Roy Arbogast, who last worked with Carpenter on *The Thing*. Under Arbogast's hands, the malevolent motorcar will be seen to repair itself each time that the enemies of its owner attempt to trash it—a fair challenge for Hollywoods's leading practitioner of mechanical effects.

One carefully preserved aspect of *Christine* is the novel's rock'n'roll spirit. While King's novel introduced each chapter with a rock song lyric illustrating the affinity between fast music and fast cars, it was decided that the use of such car tunes would be a bit unsubtle for the film. Still, rock will be a throbbing presence; Christine's radio plays nothing but 1950's rock'n'roll—and naturally the rock hits hardest when Christine is off on one of her frequent destructive rampages. Along with acknowledged 50's stars like Buddy Holly and Little Richard, some of the more esoteric rock heroes of the age, including The Viscounts and Johnny Ace, will take a place on Christine's Hell-bound hit parade.

Christine will have a theme of her own, and this, like all of the film's original music, will be composed by Carpenter. While it seems a perfect opportunity for Carpenter to re-form his informal rock ensemble the Coupe de Villes, that apparently has not proven to be a practical choice. "Most of John's music will be electronic," says Kobritz, "since he's had such success with that in the past, though, right now, he is debating the possibility of some rock instrumentation."

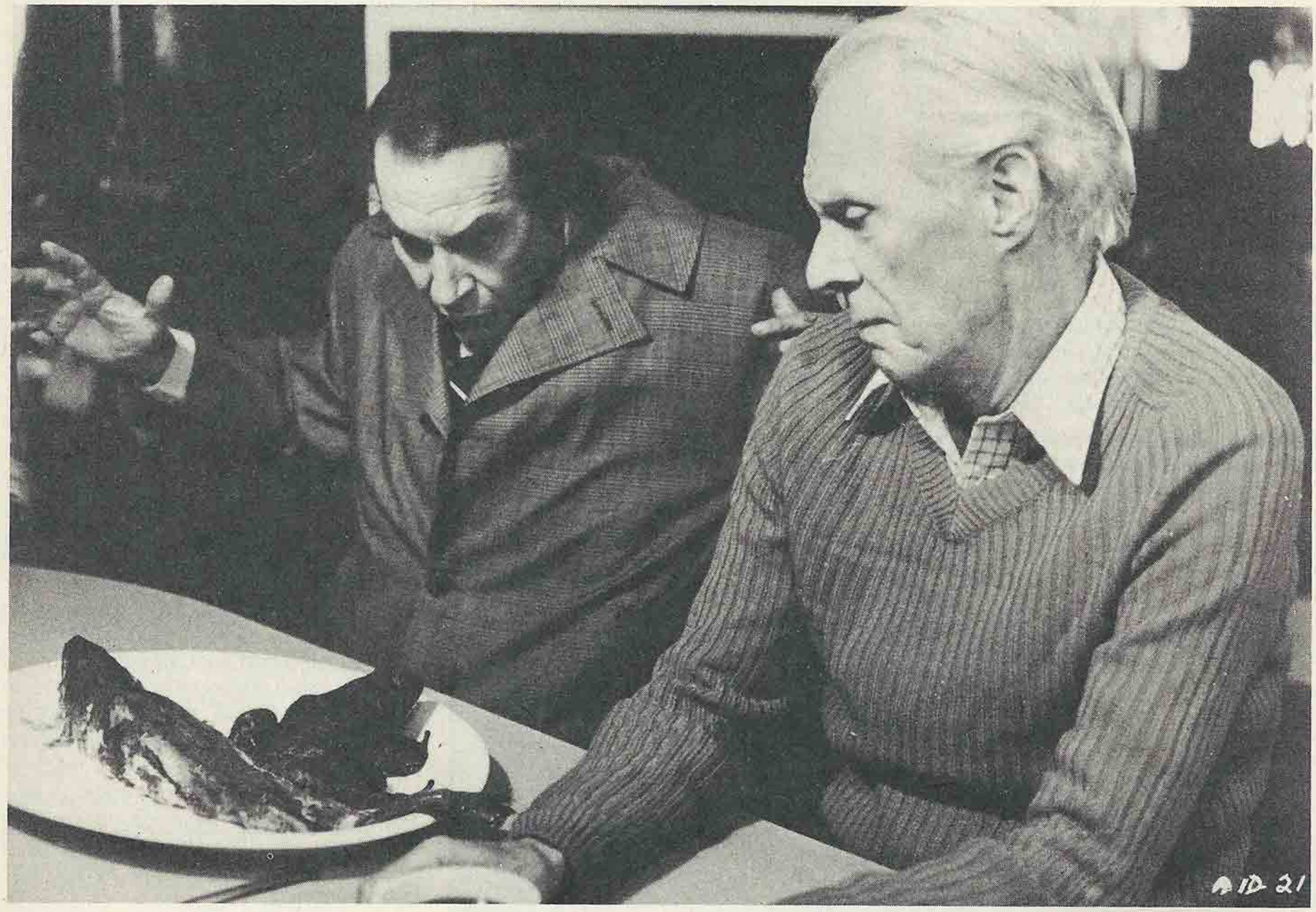
We asked Kobritz whether he agreed with our notion that, since Universal's bad luck at the box office last year, the majors had been running scared at the mention of horror. "Yes, that's so. But like anything else, it will only take one hit to bring it back; horror films will always be made, and always moving in and out of style. Universal made a number of lousy ones, and eveybody's turned off by them. But this is not a conventional horror movie; there are no vampires; it's taking a car, and three very likeable teenagers, and mixing it up with rock'and'roll.

"Hopefully, Christine will work. I certainly hope so, because it's really by choice that I've worked in the genres of horror and suspense. I like the field, and when it's done well, it elicits an extraordinary response from the audience; it's something that relies very heavily on visuals, on the movement of cameras, on the subtleties of grouping and regrouping within a frame. It's pictures, not words. It's important to remember that this is what our heritage in movies is about—not two people talking on a screen."

Alone In The Dark

Writer-director Jack Sholder proves that you don't have to like horror movies to make a good one.

By **BOB MARTIN**



PHOTOS: © 1982 NEW LINE CINEMA

Ever look at your food and find it staring back at you? This would never happen at MacDonald's.

"As a child, I was never one of those who would go to see every horror film, the way other kids collect baseball cards," says Jack Sholder. "I found most of them to be stupid and uninteresting. The only one that really scared the piss out of me was *Invasion of the Body Snatchers;* I remember literally screaming out loud, and it was fun. But, today, I'd say I pretty much fit in with the statistics that say that people over 25 don't generally enjoy horror films. To make somebody jump is one of the easiest things to do, any moron can do it—and if you look at many horror films, you'll realize that a great many morons *do* do it."

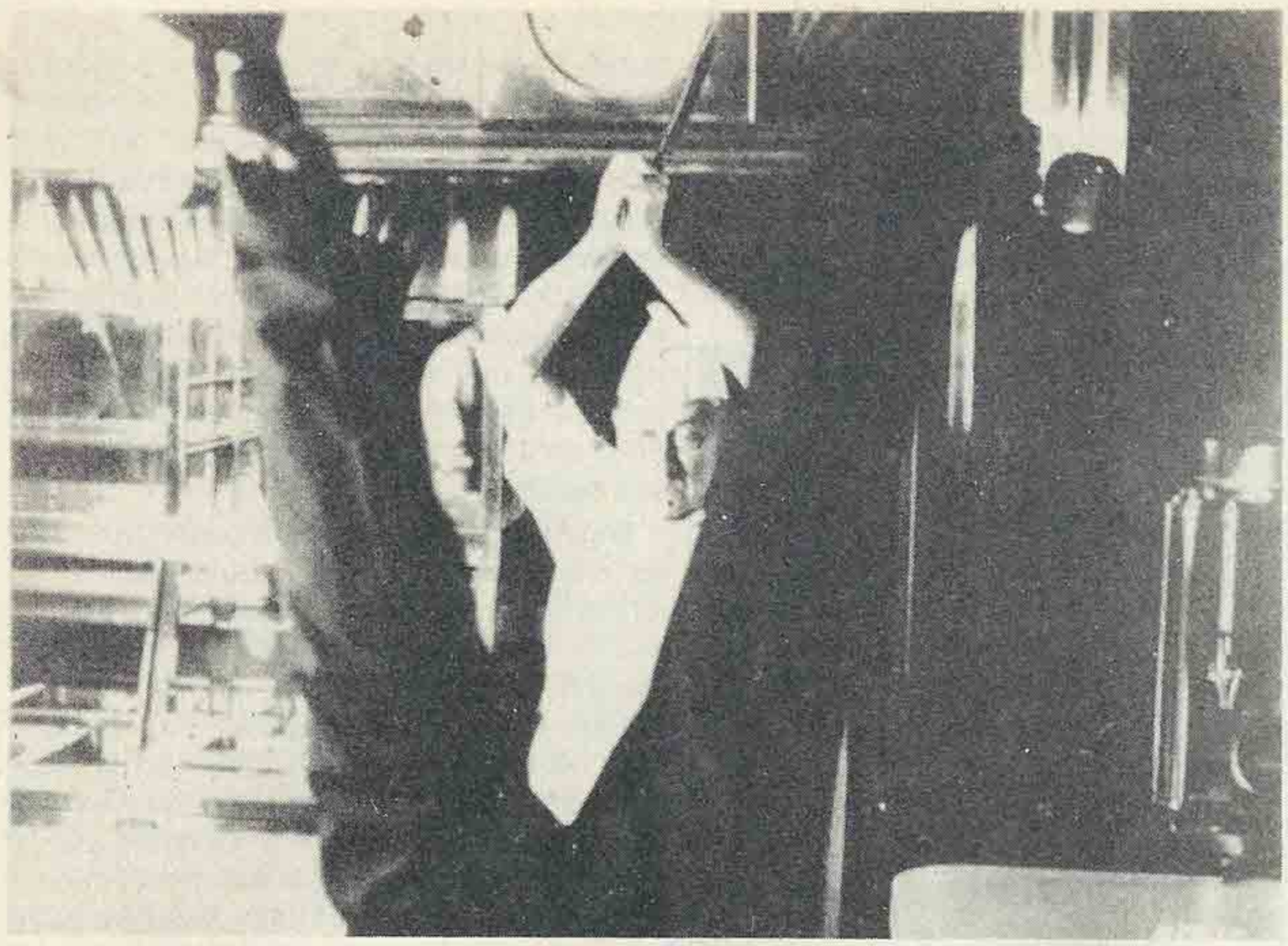
Though these may strike some as bold words for a director with a single feature to his credit, Sholder's talents as a film editor have been rewarded by an Emmy for his work on the PBS series *3-2-1 Contact*. As a director, his short films have received awards at festivals in San Francisco, Chicago and Atlanta, and two of these, "The Garden Party," with Jessica Harper and Beatrice Straight, and "The Golden Honeymoon" (based on stories by Katherine Mansfield and Ring Lardner, respectively) were broadcast by PBS as part of their "American Short Story" series. More recently, a program of his films was featured at the Museum of Modern Art.

"When I was of an age to be interested in horror films," Sholder continues, "my real fascinationg was classical music. I wanted to be a professional classical trumpet player, and I was really quite good at it. Then, when I realized I wasn't going to be the world's greatest trumpet player, I didn't want to be the world's greatest second trumpet player. Then I decided to be a chemical engineer, and went to Drexel Institute of Technology — affectionately known as 'Dreck Tech.' I got out of there pretty quick, and then I decided I would become a writer and poet. When I discovered that I didn't like writing, I decided that I would make films.

"The reason that I wanted to make films, as with my interests in music, and in poetry and literature, was that I wanted people to be somewhat *moved.* When you see a film by Renoir or Truffaut or Bergman, or a film like John Ford's *The Searchers,* you walk out of the film a little above the pavement. In terms of the order of emotions that are evoked, I think that scaring people is one level higher than giving someone a hard-on. Perhaps not even that."

Though Sholder attended Antioch College and the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, he never attended any sort of film school (which he considers to his advantage as a filmmaker). It was through a job cataloging films for anthropological study, and through a girlfriend that he first became deeply interested in film.

Sholder's notion to make a suspense film is of more recent origin. "I've known Bob Shaye, the head of New Line Cinema, for a very long time," says Sholder, "I was at his wedding, and his wife went into labor in my apartment. He's seen some of my short



The short order cook (Pleasence) of "Mom's Diner" makes short work of Landau in a mock-Freudian dream sequence.

films, and I've edited a lot of trailers for him. I was in his office one evening after closing time, and I asked him what he'd think of a story about a bunch of maniacs who escape from a mental institution during a blackout, terrorize Little Italy and are captured by the Mafia. He told me he liked the idea, and proposed that I write the script, for very little money. Then, if the film were made, I would direct it under a deal that would compensate for the lower payment on the script."

Though the final screenplay is credited to Sholder, the story was developed by the director in collaboration with Shaye and another writer, Michael Harpster. The largest revision from Sholder's original idea was the change of setting, from lower Manhattan's Italian community to suburban New York, a change dictated by the high cost of location shooting in urban areas. Since the Mafia holds a low profile in the 'burbs, the Sicilians fell by the wayside.

Sholder felt it was important from the first to see that the film reflect his sense of humor; he considers the evocation of laughter a far more honorable pursuit than the chore of scaring people. "The whole idea of the shrinks provided a good opportunity to do a send-up. I didn't want to write a comedy, though; I didn't want to do, for instance, what was done in *Mother's Day*, which I think played down to the audience, that said 'We're better than the genre.' I wanted to do a film that would take its job as a horror film seriously—really scare people and give them their money's worth, with interesting, real characters. At the same time, humor is very useful in setting up scares; there's a scene in *Jaws* where some people are out in a boat, and you know the shark is going to turn up; it's gonna come, it's gonna come any second. . .then there's a little joke, and all your defenses go down, when *whammo*, the shark comes up the back of the boat! I must've jumped six feet."

Sholder's handling of the frightening elements in *Alone in the Dark* was also influenced by his experience editing *The Burning*, which he says "was a much more frightening film before it got the rating, and a lot of Tom Savini's effects were cut out. As a horror film, I think it was quite scary, but it had an awful script; it will be forgotten, though they had a good director. But it was very helpful to me, because it was made by people who had never made a movie before who got videotapes and studied every successful horror film, to put together a *That's Entertainment* of horror films. It helped me to learn all the conventions, the different kinds of scares and the different kinds of set-ups. So after *The Burning*, when Bob Shaye approached me for a rewrite, I was delighted to do it, with all that I'd learned.

"For instance, we had a scene in *Alone in the Dark* with two bodies falling out of a closet—every horror film has a body fall out of the closet, but ours differs in the set-up. There's a fire and maniac in the basement, and the husband says to his wife, where's the fire extinguisher? He's going into the basement—the sort of stupid thing that people do in horror films that make audiences groan, 'oh, come on.' But we've established that they're trapped in the house; everyone that's left the house has been killed. So the wife says, 'Don't go down in the basement,' there's a fight, shouting, the husband says, "Look, it's a wooden house, if I don't go down we'll burn to death." So that's resolved and the wife turns to the closet to get the fire extinguisher, and the bodies fall out.

"To me, the film is about what's crazy and what's not. There's a line in the film that came from an experience of mine, in a bank. I hate Muzak, it's one of my pet peeves, and I approached a bank officer and said, 'Look, I must complain; I think it's terrible that you have Muzak here, can you please turn it off.' Right away, of course, they look at you like you're a bag lady. So the bank officer said to me, 'I don't hear it, most people never hear it. . .maybe you have sensitive hearing; my wife hears sounds coming out of the TV when it's not turned on.' So I had the detective give that line at the dinner table, and turn to the young psychiatrist and say, 'Is that normal. . .or what?' and the psychiatrist replies, 'I don't know what's normal anymore.' That's the whole thing; like when the same psychiatrist goes to a rock club and there's a band there called the Sic F*cs singing a song called *Chop Up Your Mother*, and everybody there looks like they should be put away."

The equation between the asylum and the outside world is carried to its logical conclusion in the picture's final scene, where

Savini, though brought in at the last moment, does a first-rate job of messing up Detective Barnett.

Jack Palance, the last surviving crazy, stumbles across the same rock club, and encounters a stoned-out young lady. "It ends with him holding the gun to the girl's head, and they're both smiling," says Sholder. "He's smiling because he knows that he's not alone—the whole world's crazy.

"I loved that ending, thought it was a marvelous, sort of existential ending. The problem is that the horror audience is not a very existential crowd. While we followed a lot of the conventions, we did not follow the convention of closing the film with a strong shock. When Palance finally confronts the family in the kitchen, the audiences shout for him to kill—and he doesn't, he walks away. Then he draws the gun on the girl—and he doesn't shoot her! In editing, I suggested to the producer, almost as a joke, that we could add the sound of a gunshot to the track, after it cuts to black. I seriously thought about it, and decided against it; I now feel that I should have done that, because this is not an art film. When a film ends on a strong note, the audience goes out buzzing."

Above: A happy ending? Below, Bunky the babysitter (Carol Levy) is convincingly terrorized in a sequence that will no doubt leave 'em breathles in Chatham, VA.

Much of the film's strength comes from its excellent cast. Dwight Schultz deserves praise as the quiet, logic-ruled doctor/hero, but the flashiest roles belong to the escaped maniacs and their keeper. "It's customary on low-budget films to get one personality with a small but crucial role, and while everybody else works six weeks, they work two weeks and their name is put on the marquee. The character Jack Palance plays was to be that character, so I knew we were going to get somebody heavy for that role, and I wanted Palance or Sterling Hayden for that role. Then I learned that they felt they should have three names instead of one; they felt they could afford it, and would more than make it up in foreign sales. We all made up lists, and when I found out Donald Pleasence was going to play the part of Dr. Bain I was thrilled out of my mind—I respect that man so much, from films like *Cul de Sac*. Martin Landau surprised me, because when I thought of him I thought of *Mission: Impossible* and *Space: 1999,* and he didn't strike me as the kind of guy who would play that kind of role. When I told him so, he said, 'Obviously, you don't know my work that well, because in most of the roles that I've played I played crazy people.'

"But the scary thing for me about working with those guys was that, in all my short films, I always rehearsed with my casts, as I did with all the non-name actors in *Alone in the Dark*. That way, we had an idea of what their characters were, and what they were going to do, while with these guys I wasn't going to meet them until the day they showed up on the set. They had to come in and be suddenly right in character. Landau, for instance, has almost no real dialogue in his role, but had instead a certain kind of presence.

"Palance was somewhat difficult. He was doing a show, *Ripley's Believe It or Not*, and it turned out that they wanted to begin shooting during our picture; he wanted to be let out and we wouldn't let him. He was also led to believe that the character he was playing was the personification of evil. He is an enormously talented man, who has a face that has limited him to playing a great many evil characters, so that did not make him happy. He walked on the set the first day and said 'I don't know what the hell to do; I don't know why I'm here; I don't like to play these characters and so on. Furthermore, he was supposed to kill somebody that night, and he said he didn't want to do that; he didn't like violence. So I said, 'Look. The guy you're playing is not a villain; he's a hero. What he's doing, he's doing because he thinks it's right. He thinks the new doctor *deserves* to be killed because he killed the old doctor.' Palance said, 'Don't give me any of that psychological horseshit.' But, in fact, that's what he did with the character. He played the character a little bit crazier than I'd thought of it, he brought a real intensity and a strange, sardonic humor to the part. So we had a truce.

"When we got to the point where we were behind schedule, we were shooting scenes as fast as we could set them up—'Ok, quick, you stand over there, roll sound, roll camera, let's go.' Palance was obviously getting very annoyed. When we were just about to roll, he stood there and said, 'I have to tell you this story. . .

" 'It was my privilege to work several times with George Stevens, the great director. Of course, they had a lot more money and resources than you people have, and he was a very powerful man who could do pretty much whatever he chose to do. But he would sit in his chair, and he had a little set of knobs right next to him. When a scene was all ready to go, when everything and everyone was on set in their expected places, he would stop. He would turn one of these knobs and music would come up, the right sort of music to prepare you for the scene. He would let the music play for about 30 seconds, and then gradually turn it down, and say, roll camera.'

"The point was made; after that, I'd always stop for 15 or 20 seconds to allow everyone to collect themselves. I learned a great deal."

Alone in the Dark is relatively restrained in its depictions of carnage. Even so, that did not save the film from problems in the effects department. "Joe Mangine, our director of photography, who also shot *Alligator, Mother's Day* and *The Sword and the Sorceror*, and did a brilliant job for us, said that our first effects man had managed to set back the cause of special effects 10 years. He had a couple of things that were good, but some of them were absolute disasters."

Fatty (Erland Van Lidth) supplies the pathos as he is befriended by young Lylah Potter (Elizabeth Ward).

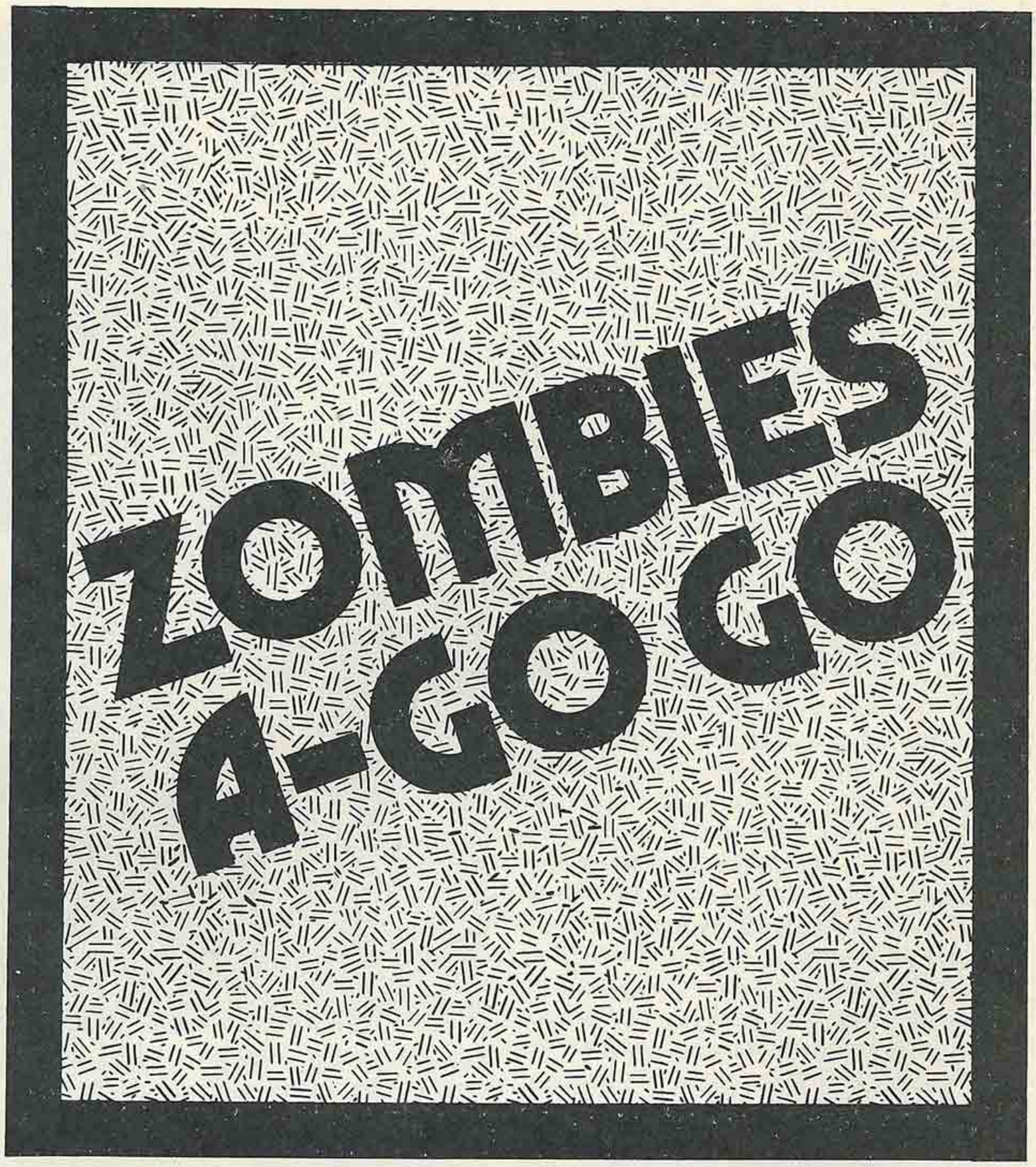
The chief disaster, however, came when the effects man refused to deliver the corpse of Donald Pleasence, whose head he had cast near the beginning of the shoot. As a result, Pleasence is cruelly wounded (his ear is sliced off), but certainly not dead, in his final appearance toward the end of the film; his ultimate fate is unknown. "That's when we brought in Tom Savini," says Sholder. "We had shot three days over our schedule in this house—the owner, coincidentally, was a psychiatrist—and we had two effects to be done, the corpse and this apparition. So we brought in Tom Savini, who I knew to be a champ from working on *The Burning*. The detective was another victim that had disappeared, and Gordon Watkins, who played the role, was still around, so we had Tom make him up for the crash through the window.

"Tom came up with just his kit, and making a guy look like he just came through a window was pretty simple for him; I remember that he did something with toilet paper—I couldn't say just what he did, but it looked horrendous. The apparition [a hallucinatory monster that is another statement of the "insanity everywhere" theme] was something else again; we had a meeting in the afternoon and he had to do it that evening. If he had more time, he told us, he could get a glass eye, some dental stuff, and really do something. So what he did for us that day is he took soap, and waxed down the guy's hair, used some mortician's wax, and got Rice Krispies and stuck it on the guy . . . literally worked with what is in the kitchen cabinet, and when he finished, I literally couldn't look at the guy, it just turned my stomach. It wasn't the world's greatest monster—it was the type of thing where it would appear, you'd jump out of your seat, and by the time you landed back in your seat it would be gone. It was quite a remarkable thing; especially after working with this other guy, where everybody worried whether he was even going to show up. Tom was professional all the way. As it turned out, we weren't able to shoot it that night. Tom did it again the next night, and in the meantime, he'd been able to materialize some teeth, a glass eye and a few other things, so he used a few less Rice Krispies the second time. He made a marvelous creature; my hat's off to Tom Savini.

"Now, if all the Fangorians come to see *Alone in the Dark* to see Savini's work, and it becomes a big success, we'll still have Donald Pleasence, minus one ear, for the sequel.

"But I doubt very much that I'd direct it."

As Jackson transforms, EFX newcomer Jack Bricker emerges from a manhole. A guest appearance by Greg Cannom (Ozzy Osbourne's werewolf man) closes the show.



Rick Baker and Jackson's Thriller

After 14 months of grueling work on *Greystoke* [to be described in more detail in STARLOG's Baker interview coming up in their issue #81], it was Rick and Elaine Baker's intention to take a leisurely year away from effects makeup. The year started according to plan, with their first real vacation in years, a leisurely trip to the Greek Islands, where the phrase "foam latex" has no equivalent in the native language; and on their return to L.A., the Bakers found it easy enough to turn down several major projects that were offered by studios anxious to have the Oscar-winner on their team. Then Baker received a phone call from the only director he couldn't refuse, John Landis. We spoke with Baker about nine weeks after that call, on the same Friday that MTV cablecast the television world premiere of the film that resulted.

"John Landis was in London at the time," Baker recalls. "He called me and said, 'Hey, guess what—I got a call from Michael Jackson, and he wants to do a video for his song *Thriller*. He wants me to direct it, and he wants to be turned into a monster in it, so I want you to do it.'

"Michael had seen *American Werewolf* and really liked it; so he wanted to make something scary, and wanted to change into a monster. Landis sent me a copy of *Thriller*, and I listened to it and listened to it, put together some ideas, things I'd like to try. At the time, I thought it was going to be something along the lines of a standard rock video.

"John came out to L.A., we had a meeting with Michael, discussed our ideas, and then John went off and wrote the script. We had come up with some ideas that I found pretty exciting, particularly the dancing zombies. For a long time, I've wanted to do a straight horror film with some zombies in it that would, at some point in the middle of the film, break into a song and dance—a song about blood'n'guts, having them pull guts out of people while singing and dancing—and go back to a horror movie after that."

While Baker welcomed the opportunity to at least partially fulfill that off-the-wall fantasy, he was less pleased with the idea of tackling a werewolf transformation with neither the time nor the budget that would be required to out-do his own past work. "I'd wanted to talk Michael out of the transformation," he says, "just because so many of them had been done, even on TV with *Manimal*. Michael, though, was really set on turning into a werewolf. At least I was able to talk him out of going for a normal werewolf; I suggested a more cat-like creature, which I

thought was more appropriate for Michael, and at least it was something *slightly* different, that would allow me a little more fun with the design. Michael liked that idea."

One might expect that Jackson was a real monster maven, given his great desire to be transformed under the hands of Baker and the lens of Landis. Actually, Jackson was subject to a good deal of kidding when Landis and Baker discovered how few horror films he had actually seen. "When we found out he hadn't seen *The Bride of Frankenstein,* we started reeling off all these names of films, and it turned out he'd seen very few," says Baker. "He'd seen *American Werewolf, Hunchback of Notre Dame* with Charles Laughton, which he also loved, *The Elephant Man* and that's about it."

Jackson's strongly-held religious views, which resulted in a disclaimer declaring his aversion to the occult at the beginning of the film, provided Baker with some trepidation. "Early on, I'd suggested a couple of winged demons, and Michael said *definitely* no demons. So I had reason to doubt that he'd want to turn into a really *monstrous* monster, and the original concept I had for this was a sort of demonic cat monster; after Michael said 'no demons,' my design sketches were of a pretty sort of black panther monster. Then we found out that Stan Winston was doing a black panther transformation for *Manimal*, so I was able to revise our design, and do something much closer to what I'd originally wanted, after all.

"We had about five weeks of preproduction time, which is really no time at all, considering that we had an elaborate transformation to do and about 30 different foam appliances to complete.

"The hardest part was that, because the entire production came together so quickly, they didn't have a lot of things settled; they didn't know how many dancers there were going to be, or who they were going to be—black people, white people, male or female. It's awfully hard to design zombie makeups for people that you don't see until two days before you shoot, and these people were going to have to dance in their makeups for two nights, 10 hours each night. So the makeups had to be designed so that they'd fit just about anybody, and they had to be relatively simple so that they'd stay on—for instance, we had to keep them away from areas like the mouth, where it's difficult to keep up the edges. So we stuck to some very simple brow and cheekbone appliances, made in various sizes and shapes to fit different people, and we made a whole bunch of teeth in a size that would fit just about anybody. When we got the dancers, we did a quick custom fitting of the teeth, using a soft material that we'd insert directly into the performer's mouth that would set in the proper shape."

The amount of work required expanded late in the production schedule, when Landis decided to increase the number of zombie dancers, and Jackson requested the inclusion of the specialty dancers seen in the graveyard during the closing credits. "For some of the dancers, there just weren't any appliances that would fit them, and they had straight paint jobs done on them," says Baker. "This was early in rehearsals, and it wasn't determined yet just what positions the dancers would be in—as it turned out, the best appliance work was positioned all the way to the back, so they were hidden from the camera."

More elaborate work was done on the closeup, non-dancing zombies, played by Rick and Elaine Baker and the EFX crew. This aspect of the production allowed Baker's people (all except Margaret Bessara, who did some painting of appliances) to devise makeups that would be totally their own. While this added more work, it also provided a welcome relief from the mass production of the dancers' appliances. To help i.d. these performers: Elaine Baker is in the foreground and Shawn McEnroe in the background in the shot of two zombies rising from their grave; Tom Hester, in a full-body suit, is the undead fellow who slides a concrete lid aside to rise from his tomb; Rick Baker emerges from the doors of a crypt, rolling his eyes; Jack Bricker climbs out of a sewer manhole; Tony Gardner is the fellow who drops an arm as he, David Miller, Mark Wilson and the other zombies surround Jackson. The Tor Johnson look-alike is played by Tim Lawrence.

Most of these makeups are only fleetingly glimpsed, though Lawrence, McEnroe, zombie extra Cynthia Garris and Bricker will be prominently featured on the packaging of Vestron Video's "Making of *Thriller*" release.

"One thing I was very concerned about was Michael's being such a 'superstar' and having to wear contact lenses, and elaborate makeups for an extended period of time," Baker says. "A lot of people don't take to it very well, but he turned out to be one of the most willing subjects I've ever had, and one of the most cooperative. More than anything, he wanted to be turned into this cat-creature. He really is a very sweet, nice person, and I thoroughly enjoyed working with him."

The press on *Thriller* has largely been concerned with its status as "the most expensive video ever made"; *TV Guide* reported that the initial $500,000 budget ballooned to a million because of its elaborate effects. Baker was surprised to read that report.

"John and I both did it practically for free," says Baker. "John did it because he was going crazy not working, and, with his court case coming up, couldn't commit himself to a feature. And I came in as a friend of John's. There's no way that I went over budget by $500,000—it was more like 10 or 15 thousand. Every department went over budget because it was originally going to be a non-union shoot, and I had lined up a very talented crew of non-union makeup artists. Then, about a week before we were to shoot, they decided to go union, and I had to round up 20 union makeup artists who could work with appliances in short order, to work nights. That kinda threw my makeup budget out the window."

The total budget for the film came to $800,000—not at all out of line for a union-made Hollywood film that runs about a tenth the length of most features, and includes an elaborate musical production number as well as Baker's effects. Perhaps the greatest expense was required for the multiple camera crews; six cameras covered the dance sequences, and most other set-ups were covered by three or more cameras. Union crews shooting at night can eat up a great deal of any budget, though this approach saved Landis a good deal of time.

With *Thriller* behind him, Baker has gone back to refusing work, for now—but his EFX Studios could whip back into action with the very next phone call.

THRILLER VIDEO PHOTOS: COURTESY EPIC RECORDS & ROCK VIDEO MAGAZINE

Attention Gorehounds!

THE GATES OF HELL Are Open!

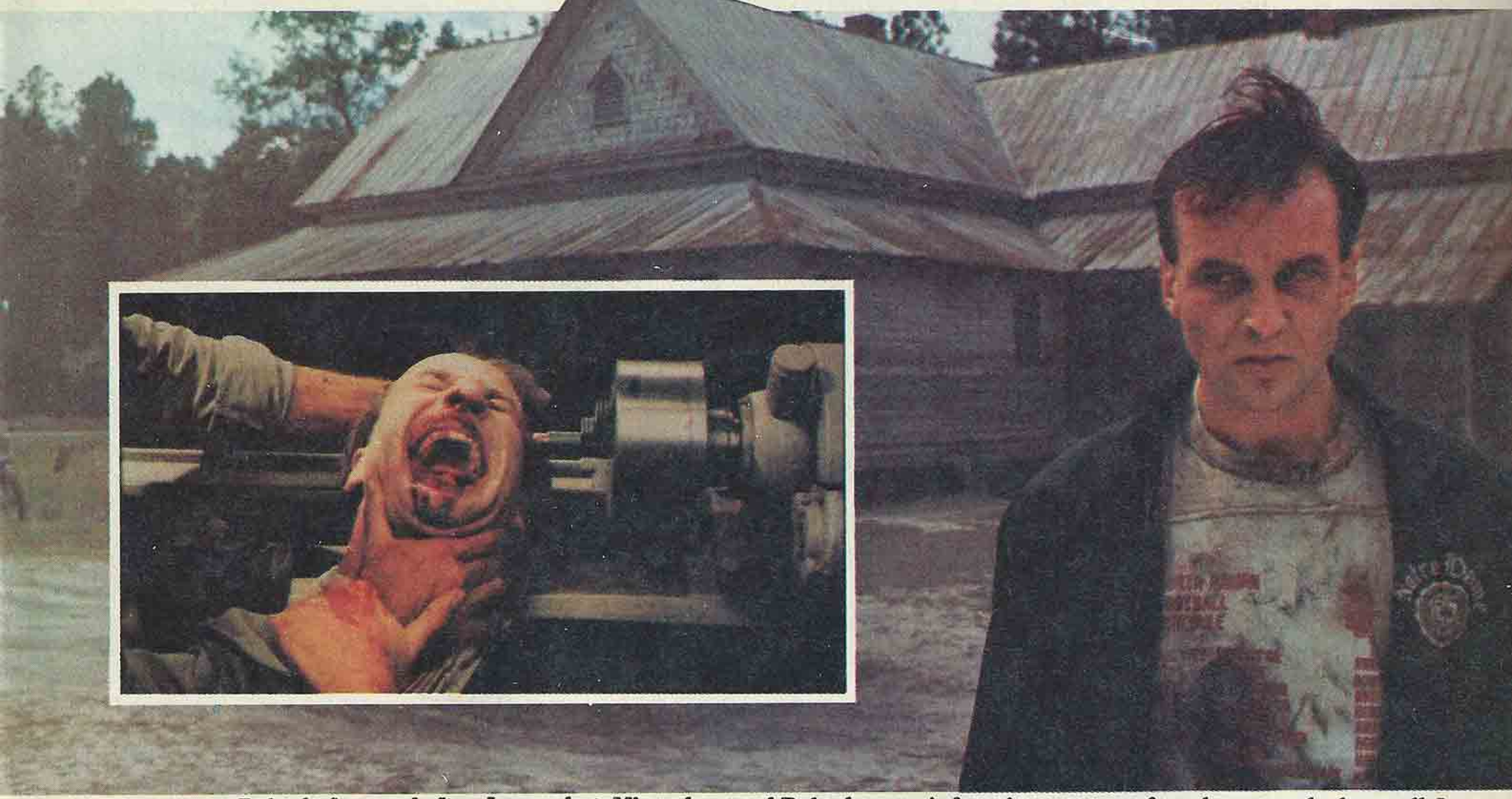
Lucio Fulci, Director of Zombie, *Speaks About his Latest Undead Epic!*

By Robert Schlockoff with David Everitt

Unreliable rumor has it that *Gates of Hell* was originally to be called *Don't Open Your Mouth!* This scene proves that director Lucio Fulci was capable of outdoing the gruesome highlights of his previous horror picture *Zombie*.

When it comes time to discuss Italian zombie movies, as it does so often these days, you've got to talk about Lucio Fulci. Three summers ago, this Italian director thrilled Fangorians with his colossal gore fest, *Zombie*. Now, Fulci has come back with even more rotted flesh and spewing entrails in *Gates of Hell*.

This time around, a priest hangs himself, and, is so doing, unleashes evil forces and a pack of homicidal zombies. The heroes must race against the clock to close the Gates of Hell before the world becomes the Devil's domain. Scenes of a young man getting his head drilled and a young woman vomiting her guts are sure to please Fango readers who demand nothing but the grossest.



Lonesome Bob—before and after. Large shot: Misunderstood Bob, the town's favorite goon, out for a happy-go-lucky stroll. Inset: Kids, don't try this at home. Fulci is a professional who knows how to do these things so that they don't hurt so much.

Before he ventured into the field of Romeroesque zombies, Fulci was a screenwriter, director and producer on a wide variety of films that contained no cannibalism nor eye violence whatsoever. He has been working in the movie industry for some 30 years and originally studied with such well known Italian directors as Michelangelo Antonioni (*Blow-Up* and *The Passenger*) and Luchino Visconti (*The Damned* and *Death in Venice*).

The following interview was conducted by French reporter Robert Schlockoff—which accounts for the French titles given for some of Fulci's lesser known movies (lesser known, at least, in America); the interview first appeared in L'Ecran Fantastique. In this talk, Fulci relates how he became involved in horror and fantasy films, and elaborates on the dramatic perspective and technique that went into the making of *Zombie* and *Gates of Hell*. As we pick up this conversation, Fulci is discussing some of his early producing and writing credits:

Fulci: I was assistant-producer on a film by L'Herbier, *The Last Days of Pompeii*, before launching out into comedy with Mario Monicelli and Steno (*Times are Hard for Vampires* with Christopher Lee). At this point I was working more on screenplays than on directing. With the exception of *Zombie* I am the source for the screenplays for all my films.

Fang: You prefer doing screenplays to directing?

Fulci: Not really. Directing interests me above all on a technical level. For me, the most important stages of a film are the screenplay, the mixing and the editing. I have a terrible flaw: I don't like "stars"!

Fang: Mario Bava had the same reaction!

Fulci: Absolutely, and Hitchcock, too, who sent little notes to his actors giving them their directions. Paul Newman asked him about this one day, and Hitch told him: "In this way I can avoid talking to you!" In actual fact, I like working with actors, but not with stars, with divas. To return to Bava, his films rest, above all, on the technical aspect, the special effects and the suspense; he doesn't really need actors. But Bava was misunderstood in Italy: he and Freda were ignored and the critics did not talk about this genius who was Bava until after his death. Among the great actors whom I've worked with, there is one exception, however: the great comedian Toto with whom I made 22 films as screenwriter or assistant-producer. Likewise, it was he who helped me produce my first film *Le Voleur*, which was, by the way, a dazzling failure! At this point I was making a lot of comedies, likewise musical films on rock 'n' roll.

Fang: Are you very familiar with fantasy movies?

Fulci: Of course, I was a great admirer of Jacques Tourneur [*The Cat People, Curse of the Demon*] and above all Roger Corman, whose Poe series I loved. Then I made enough comedies and refused to make any more; I was without work for a year because of this, and that was when some friends and I produced a Western which, in my opinion, accentuates the fantastic: *The Time of Massacre*. An intimist film, radically different from the Italian Westerns of that time, but with a lot of violence. The story is of two brothers who come face to face in an unreal, ultra-violent atmosphere. Franco Nero was the leading actor in it; he was no longer filming "Django" Westerns. The fantastic above all first made its appearance in my films with *Carole* (*Une Lucertola Con La Pelle Di Donna*), which starts out like a fantastic film but ends in the form of a police investigation.

Fang: There are surprising nightmares in *Carole*, such as that gigantic goose which pursues Carole or the scene with the bats which swoop down on her en masse.

Fulci: We had certain problems with this sequence that Carlo Rambaldi [*Alien* and *E.T.*] did the special effects for. Rambaldi constructed mechanical bats sliding along wires and beating their wings; besides, he added the superimposition of the shadows of the bats. I remember that Bava was very surprised at this special effect, but I told him: "Listen, Mario, without doubt you would have done this scene a thousand times better than I did!"

Fang: There are also those dogs, their stomachs open, in the laboratory. A terrible scene!

Fulci: Yes, Rambaldi used these artificial dogs, inside which he put special bags which, operated from behind, give the impression that the heart and the entrails of these animals move. By the way, we were indicted on this subject; people thought that we were using real dogs, which is unthinkable. I love dogs! At the trial, Rambaldi saved me from two years of prison by finding one of the synthetic dogs which he used for the sequence.

Fang: One thing which strikes many people in seeing *Carole* and *L'Emmurree Vivante* (*Sette Notte in Nero*) are the absolutely unheard-of technical aspects of these films!

Fulci: I've always wanted to move ahead, to try new processes. This was, then, the case with *The House of Exorcism* [not to be confused with the Mario Bava movie released in this country under the same title] a very special film which treats the problem of witchcraft in our time, in a small district in the south of Italy: some children are killed and a "witch" is accused of these murders by a priest; the most violent scene that I've ever done, by the way, is that where the poor woman is killed by being hit with chains by the peasants. It turns out that the priest is guilty of these crimes. The film caused a sensation in Italy and I decided to continue in this vein and produce a totally fantastic film: *L'Emmurree Vivante*.

Fang: Which is a surprising film and should have presented a lot of problems.

Fulci: Yes, this is a film for which I suffered a lot on the professional level. It took a certain time before I had written the story with my scriptwriter Dardano Sarchetti, but the producers, Luigi and Aurelio Di Laurentiis, pestered me for a year. One day they wanted to make a mystery film, the next day a comedy, etc. I resisted for a whole year, then I refused; they made me lose 12 months, and, in addition, it was impossible for me to work in such conditions. It was then that I met the producer Fulvio Frizzi, the father of my composer Fabio, who hired the marvelous actress Jennifer O'Neill. I'm grateful to Fulvio Frizzi for his strong will and his tenacity which allowed me to finish this film well. We produced it just as it was originally written, and *L'Emmurree Vivante* proved that I was right, because it met with a lot of favor at your Festival, with the young people in the audience that all my films are aimed at!

Fang: The film contains an especially shocking scene, when a woman falls from a cliff and one sees clearly her face crash onto the rocks!

Fulci: We repeated a little the final sequence where the priest died in *The House of Exorcism*; the special effects consisted of shooting with a camera lying down with an actress stretched out along a kind of rail. Then, one had the actress slide on the board on which she was attached toward the camera and the rock. At the moment when she reaches the rock, the face of the actress is substituted in closeup by a head made of plastic which, upon contact with the rock, bursts into an explosion without flames. The sequence, then, alternates with the total shots where one sees a dummy fall, the shots close to the actress on the rail and the closeup shots of the dummy.

Fang: *L'Emmuree Vivante* was a turning point in your career?

Fulci: With regard to the fantastic, yes, but on a commercial level it was a failure, and for the next two years, I ended up having to produce music hall revues on TV! It was at that point that the producer of *Zombie*, Fabrizio de Angelis, came to see me. He was enchanted with *L'Emmuree Vivante*, and was convinced that no one but me would be better to produce *Zombie*. I was very happy, because I was able to reassemble the crew from my previous films and the shooting went perfectly.

Fang: You didn't write the script for *Zombie*?

Fulci: No, but I modified it quite a lot. I wanted to make a film which was completely fantastic and free, in contrast to *L'Emmuree Vivante* which was a film based above all on a mechanism demanding a certain cerebral attention. Here, this was not the case: it's a film of sensations, playing on fear and, of course, horror. In this regard I'm very happy with the masterful work of Giannetto de Rossi, already responsible for the makeup for *Living Dead at the Manchester Morgue*, of Jorge Grau in particular, this scene of the eye which impressed many people. Giannetto de Rossi wasn't able to be present for the shooting of *Gates of Hell* and it was Franco Rufini who replaced him, but Giannetto will return for *L'Al Di La*.

Fang: What do you have to say to people who attack you with regard to the horror in your films?

Fulci: Horror isn't an end for me; what interests me above everything else is fantasy: there are only a few horror scenes in *Gates of Hell*, and it is above all the tension which is important in this film. With *Gates of Hell*, I have in fact abandoned horror for its own sake and wanted to make a nightmare film where horror is present, everywhere, even in forms pretending to be inoffensive. There are only two scenes where horror occurs in a spectacular manner. By the way, one of them, that in which the young Bob undergoes a trepanning, is a cry which I wanted to launch against a certain kind of fascism, that of the father of this girl who kills Bob because Bob is a different marginal being: a terrified victim who doesn't understand the hostility which is unleashed against him, like the so-called "witch" in *The House of Exorcism*. I wanted to show Bob as a young man a bit lost, fearful, and whom the girls are fond of because he's nice, but unfortunately they didn't let me develop enough the reactionary side of certain inhabitants of Dunwich. *Gates of Hell* is for me a visual representation of the metaphysical aspect of bad dreams: the horrors which nightmares arouse in us. I shot *Gates of Hell* in Savannah, Georgia, and I completely transformed this city to make out of it a nightmarish city, unreal, of the kind that the viewers are unable to pinpoint as a particular city. I hope to do the same with my own vision of New Orleans in *L'Al Di La*.

Fang: The music in *Gates of Hell* is excellent, in particular this surprising and rhythmic tune which accompanies the living-dead.

One of the quiet moments in *Gates of Hell*.

Fulci: Yes, the march of the Zombies? (Smiles) I was happily surprised to hear the whole audience at the Rex sing the theme of the zombies. It is this total audience participation to this kind of film at the Festival which is very important and which represents a new factor in films: the evolving rapport between the cineaste and the audience, and the film and the viewers thus meet on the same level, and I think that it's very interesting on a sociological level, because that proves that many things have to change in the cinema. It is thus necessary to suppress the possible ambiguities between the viewer and the cineaste. By the way, to return to horror in my films, it

Italian zombies from hell get up and boogie.

ALL PHOTOS: © 1983 M.P.M.

Zombies on the prowl in *Gates of Hell*. Top: Cute kids are not exempt from decayed, undead grips from the grave. Bottom: Another Fulci zombie grabs a handful of skull.

isn't so much the horror that the people are applauding, because they applaud after such sequences: many people talk incorrectly about the gratuitousness with regard to horror, and the forces of censorship talk about the inciting to violence, which I deny totally! The viewer doesn't participate in the violence, but, on the contrary, is relieved from it, he is free from the horrors contained in himself, and that is due to the bias of the film.

Fang: In this regard it is interesting to note that one of the most applauded scenes is that in which the zombies burn.

Fulci: Yes, because the audience is fundamentally against Evil. I think the police films with Clint Eastwood are much more dangerous for young people. My films are no more than nightmares at the end of which one wakes up, relieved and relaxed. I feel the cinema of the fantastic is deeply liberating, for young people in particular, due to this "audience participation." In *Gates of Hell* I was in fact above all interested in the story much more than in these zombies who only appeared incidentally.

Fang: Let's talk about certain special effects of *Gates of Hell,* in particular about the rain of worms and maggots.

Fulci: Yes, that presented us with a lot of problems, because the actors had a hard time accepting the fact that we stuck living worms on their faces! We used thousands of real maggots and mealworms, around 10 kg.!

Fang: And the sequence where the girl vomits her entrails.

Fulci: Oh yes, well, we had to use the entrails of a sheep that had just had its throat cut (because after 10 minutes the entrails start to dry out and can't be used) which really had to be swallowed by the actress and which she then had to vomit up. Horrible, isn't it! In the closeups where the entrails come flying out, we used, of course, a dummy which spewed out the entrails.

Fang: Can we talk with you a bit about *L'Al Di La*?

Fulci: The theme is as follows: a hotel is built on one of the seven gates of Hell; it thus separates the world of the living from that of the dead, but one day the gates are opened by mistake. If you will, the hotel is in some manner a passageway—but an important one—between Hell and our own world, represented by a city and in particular by an immense hospital. *L'Al Di La* is a mysterious story where the dead are at the center of the film, but they aren't "aggressive" dead people as in *Zombie*. They do certain things, but depend totally on the story itself, of which the theme is very metaphysical, with, however, certain horror scenes. That is, the film is only like this at the beginning; it's a little difficult for me to talk about it now. I wanted to use Tisa Farrow again, but she's a rather bizarre girl; the last I heard, she had become a taxi driver in Manhattan!

Fang: One thing that seems interesting in *L'Al Di La* is your personal vision of the beyond, which makes me think of Hell such as you depict it in the final scene of *Gates of Hell*.

Fulci: Yes, these skeletons in *Gates of Hell,* spread out on the bottom of the crypt, have a function other than frightening: this represents a certain end and these dead people — sovereign because they are above our heads—would well be able to represent Hell in this fantastic place which has nothing to do with traditional crypts. But in *L'Al Di La*, I tackle Hell with an even more metaphysical elaboration.

Fang: The sound track was very important for you in *Gates of Hell*.

Fulci: Yes, and not only the music, but also the sound, the sound effects, the bird cries, etc. I wanted to create a new sound environment throughout this film and to that effect I worked very closely with the mixing. I wanted expressly that the sound of the film be very strong, because the sound track is itself nightmarish!

Fang: And *The Black Cat*?

Fulci: I shot it pretty quickly to do a favor for a producer friend of mine. It is a fantasy, but, here again, with a bit of horror. In fact, the new Poe thing is very difficult to adapt to film, and I deviated a bit. I feel that this film is above all for me an homage to this master of fantasy literature, perhaps likewise an homage to Corman. I feel that fantasy cinema, and in particular horror films, is currently in the process of being revived. Many people are starting to appreciate the value of this kind of film. And your Festival taught me something new, this participation of the audience with the film, in such a close way. That proves that not only is fantasy a genre above all aimed for young people—which I'm very happy about—but also that with such a reaction, popular cinema, which is the cinema par excellence, is becoming socially acceptable; all the viewers are on the same level and everyone reacts the same way in every country, regardless of social origin or age. In this way the cinema is becoming international, and I think that to attain such a result is the dream of every true film devotee.

EVIL DEAD

Stephen King calls it "the most ferociously original movie of 1982."

By Bob Martin

The first inkling we had that *Evil Dead* might be an exception to the usual run of low-budget horror films came from Claude Scasso and Caroline Vie, two correspondents for *Cine-Zine-Zone*, a French horror film journal. They visited America not long after attending this year's Cannes Film Festival, and were bubbling with enthusiasm for the picture. In fact, Caroline had been sitting next to Stephen King during the screening. . . and King, we're told, was petrified, spending much of the film's screen-time cowering behind the seat before him.

A few days later, we read Stephen King's rave review of *Evil Dead* in the November issue of *Twilight Zone* magazine, in which he declares the film a work of genius, "the most ferociously original horror film of 1982. . . beyond doubt." Now, we're talking about a year that includes *Basket Case*, *Poltergeist*, *The Thing*, even *Creepshow*, King's own collaboration with George Romero—the man *must* have been impressed!

King seems to be mainly impressed with Sam Raimi, a young filmmaker based in (get ready) Ferndale, Michigan, just outside Detroit. Whipping into action (and with the

help of *TZ* editor T.E.D. Klein), we were able to track down Raimi, and by plying him with free copies of FANGORIA's early issues (he already had the later ones), got him to sit down for an interview, along with his producer, Robert Tapert, and his associate producer (who also stars in *Evil Dead*), Bruce Campbell.

Raimi recalls the first time he was profoundly moved by a film; "It was *Fantastic Voyage*," Raimi recalls. "My parents took me. I must have been really young, because I remember a warning that appeared at the beginning of the film, that my father read to me because I was too young to read it myself. It was this incredible rap about how intense and new and exciting this was going to be, moving through the human body . . . and because my father was reading it to me, it made it all true and real. My *father* told me we were about to journey through the human body, and then I saw it happening."

It was only a few years later that Raimi was putting his own images on screen. "It started when I was 12 or 13, and a friend of mine got a videotape machine and camera," Raimi continues. "We were always making jokes, so it became another way to make jokes—little skits imitating war movies, Westerns, whatever. That worked out so well that, shortly after, I got a super 8 camera and started making little clips with that."

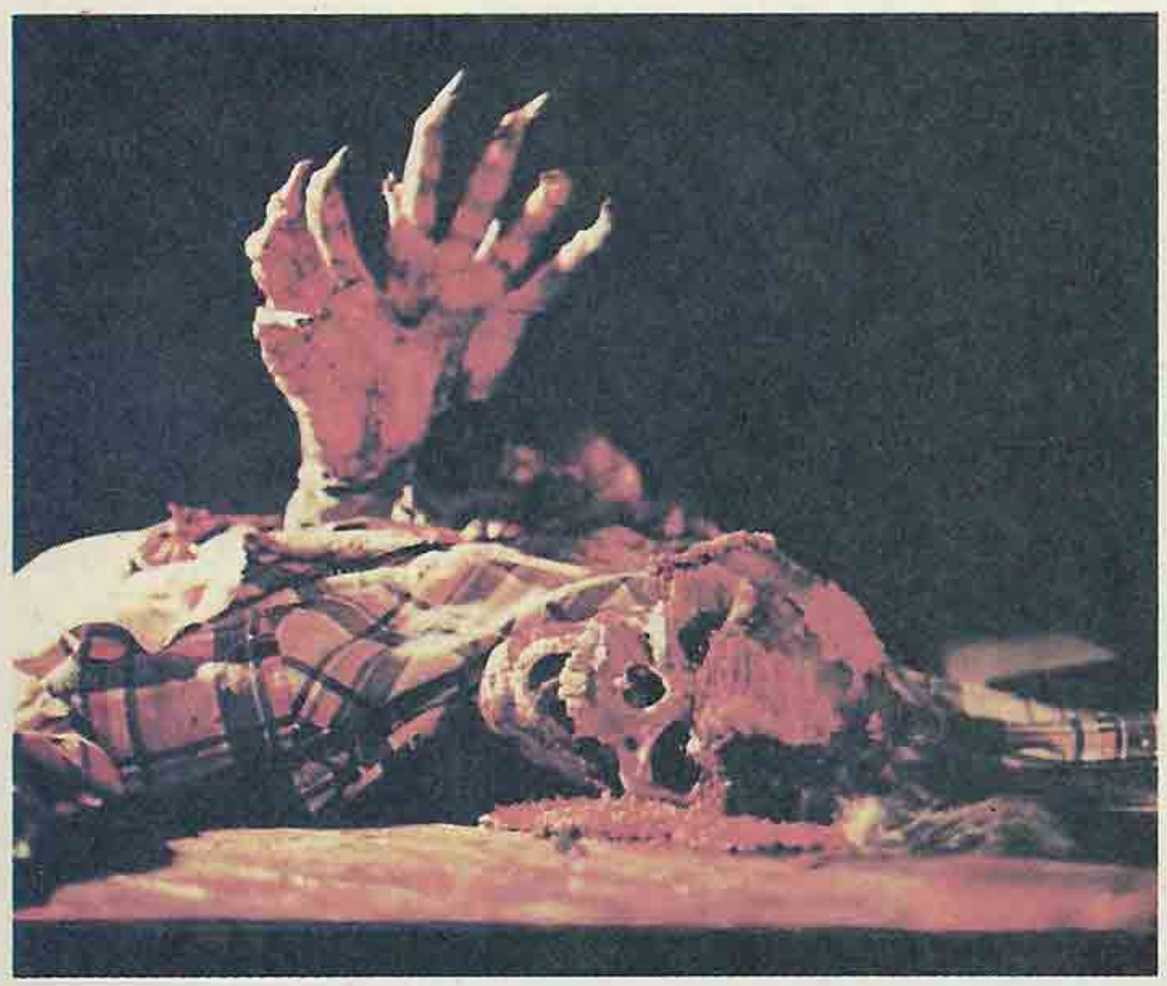
Like such other "ferociously original" filmmakers as Romero, Cronenberg and Hooper, Raimi learned his craft without the benefit of film school training. He learned film by starting young, by making films and more films (30 by his own count); from experience and from his co-workers.

One of the co-workers who shared in Raimi's education was Bruce Campbell, one of the ringleaders of a filmmaking gang that Raimi joined in high school ("My favorite was a comedy we made, titled *Six Months to Live*," Raimi recalls). When we asked the inevitable question, "Why Detroit?", it is Campbell that offers an answer. "We found that we were able to do it here. Talent does tend to run away from Detroit; once someone has made progress here, they feel it's time to go to New York, or to L.A., and do it for real. We did take *Evil Dead* to New York for postproduction, because there are certain facilities that just aren't available. For instance we couldn't do sound here." In New York, the group was not only able to find excellent sound facilities; they were also able to recruit recording engineer Mel Zelniker, whose past credits include *Blow Out*, *Raging Bull*, and *Reds*.

Another early Raimi ally was Robert Tapert, whom Raimi met in a Shakespeare course at college. Together, Raimi and Tapert formed the Michigan State University Society of Creative Filmmaking, which became a commercial outlet for several films they made together, and for several of Raimi's high school films. "We were able to rent auditorium space, run newspaper ads and sell tickets; we acted as our own projectionists," says Raimi. "That was really a great learning experience—we were able to sit among the audience as they screamed, 'This sucks!' After awhile, out of self-defense, we started making better films." An early success by the filmmaking team was the story of a college student abused by his professors and dumped by his girlfriend who cracks up during the week before finals —*The Happy Valley Kid: The Story of a Student Driven Mad* was the evocative title.

A later addition to MSUSCF was Tom Sullivan, a young effects whiz who was previously associated with the ill-fated

Bruce Campbell emotes through a layer of crimson, after falling for the old hands-through-the-wall trick.



Whatever's happening here, he/she/it is a mess!

Not a pretty sight.

ALL PHOTOS: © 1982 RENAISSANCE PICTURES

The shots on our cover and previous pages are posed publicity shots, not actually in the film. This page illustrates a few of the suspenseful moments that sent King cowering. NOTE: the article neglects to mention the work of optical effects supervisor Bart Kelsey, a major error we'll be setting straight in a future issue.

Lovecraftian horror project, *Cry of Cthulhu*. Sullivan's artistic talent was immediately put to use designing the ads for the film group's showings, but it was his hands-on experience in makeup effects and stop motion that made him invaluable when the project began.

While there were no film courses of interest to Raimi at MSU, he does credit his study of literature and the humanities with making him a better storyteller. The script of *Evil Dead*, which was completed in first draft during his college years, owes some of its thematic structure to Raimi's borrowings from English Lit. "I don't want to get too artistic," Raimi says, "but I think the picture was strengthened by the notion of time, as in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. There, time moves in an orderly, progressive fashion, and then, at a certain point, time stops. Then, when evil is in control, time moves backwards; that's what I used in *Evil Dead*. There's a clock in the film that serves as a focal point; a gauge to the evil."

However elegantly structured, the story of *Evil Dead* is a simple one. Five college students—Ash (Bruce Campbell), Cheryl (Ellen Sandweiss), Linda (Betsy Baker), Scott (Hal Delrich), and Shelly (Sarah York)—venture into the wooded mountains of Tennessee to spend a weekend of fun in an isolated country cabin. There they encounter an Evil Presence—and, worse, discover a demonic relic, the ancient Book of the Dead. The Book, bound in human flesh and written in blood, contains the resurrection formulas that will cause the spirits of the evil dead to rise and take control, one by one, of the students. As the survivors see their friends and lovers turn into hideous, murdering demons, they learn that the only way to kill the Possessed is to dismember them. "You can shoot 'em or stab 'em," says Raimi, "but the spirits just lift the body up again, and they come right at you. You really have to cut 'em up."

So Raimi had a story. He also had a producer, a special effects man, and a lead actor. With all of the MSUSCF members out of school and now a part of Renaissance Pictures, Inc., he even had a production company. What was missing? *Money!*

Even a low-budget, 16mm horror film requires a reasonable amount of the green stuff to launch, and so Raimi and crew hatched a plan to lure investors. With much of the same cast and crew that would later tackle the feature, Raimi shot *Within the Woods*, a 30-minute adaptation of the same story, in super 8 format. "That was our main tool for financing," says Raimi. "Part of it was for the investors to believe in that picture, and to perceive it as scary. The other part was for them to believe us; that we were hard-working young men trying to get started, that we wouldn't be taking salaries and intended to bring it in as cheaply as possible, to safeguard that investment. So it was a combination of all those things."

One incident that occurred in the making of the "short version" is worth recounting here, though the tale does reveal one of the film's niftier shocks (NOTE: Skip to the next paragraph if you wish to preserve the surprise.). "In the short, Bruce Campbell played a monster, and Ellen Sandweiss played the hero—the opposite from the feature. There was a scene where Ellen is battling with him, and slices into his arm with a knife, which is left dangling. The script called for Bruce to take hold of the arm and rip it off, to show that these monster mean *business*. But then the arm wouldn't come off—so Bruce *bit* it off. It looked so great, we kept it in the short, and wrote it into the picture."

As the financing came together, the next steps were casting and the selection of locations. Producer Tapert recalls, "We had already cast Ellen Sandweiss, who had also been in the 8mm version. She plays the 'outsider' of the group; there's two guys and three girls, and she's the third girl. She's a little more in tune with the fact that something's wrong—and she's the first one to go, when she walks out into the woods."

Bruce Campbell was already cast, as far as Tapert and Raimi were concerned. Still, Campbell insisted that a screen test be made to insure that he was "right" for the role, a very exacting one. In addition to the physical exertion of battling the monsters with tooth, claw and chainsaw, much of his screen time is spent half-covered in Karo corn syrup-based blood. "I kept a bottle of it with me at all times," says Campbell, "with a feed-brush attached, and re-applied it between each take, to my face and hair. Sticky at first, but it gets to be fun . . . My character is a fellow who goes from being a useless idiot to a useful one; he has to decide whether he has to be a man or a mouse, and he stops licking cheese after a while."

"Filling out the rest of the cast was much more difficult than we had thought," says Tapert. "Everyone in Detroit works on car commercials and the actresses in Detroit, or at least the women in Detroit who call themselves actresses, really want to work the auto shows and get paid $700 a week. So when we said we were going down to Tennessee to shoot a feature, and asked if they'd like to audition, the answer was often 'Not really,' or 'I'm going to be working the auto show then.' So we went through a hundred or so people before we cast the last three roles,one guy and two women."

The last role was cast almost by accident. Hal Delrich, who plays Scott, never intended to audition; he had come in with a friend of his who had almost clinched the role. At the final reading, however, it was clear to all that it was Delrich, and not his friend, who was perfectly suited to the role. "That caused a little hard feelings between he and his friend," says Tapert, "but that really wasn't our problem." And, in Stephen King's review, Delrich is singled out for special praise, for bringing "the happy, beer-swilling fraternity scuzzo to gruesome life."

The Tennessee location schedule was planned for seven weeks, which grew to 11 in the course of filming. The script called for only a few locations, including an isolated cabin in the Tennessee woods within range of more civilized accommodations for cast and crew, and two nearly-identical bridges—one that would be crossed by the cast as the college students head toward the cabin, and another that was sufficiently broken down that authorities would allow the crew to destroy it in a later scene. We were rather surprised to hear that the Tennessee State Film Commission was of major help to the young filmmakers; in many states low-budget filmmakers, especially those dealing in grue and gore, have found little help available from such governmental commissions. "I'm not entirely sure they knew how low-budget we were," says Raimi. "We told them we were making a picture, they said great, and put us in touch with a gentleman named George Holt, who was very helpful in finding those locations. About a month into the picture, some members of the commission came down to the location and, to say the least, they were shocked. We had a road leading to the location that you couldn't drive down, because it had been raining steadily; they came in suits and dresses and high heels and had to walk down a half-mile of mud. Then when they saw the place, it looked like a neutron bomb had gone off in there—karo syrup blood covering every inch of the floor, everything destroyed, a shotgun lying around . . . I think they thought we were part of the Manson family."

Location shooting had a number of real-life scary moments; northern city dwellers seldom feel at home in the hills of Tennessee, especially since *Deliverance*. "The fact that the cabin was located in a small valley, about a half-mile from a public dirt road, added something to the atmosphere and to the physical nightmare of making a movie in a cabin in the woods," says Tapert. "People would stand up on the ridge over the cabin and watch what we were doing. Once, we were away from the cabin for about 10 minutes—when we came back, all the power tools were gone. That was a little unsettling. But just about everybody we had personal contact with down there was very nice to us; we were down there for Thanksgiving and Christmas, and a family prepared us these tremendous Southern meals that we'd never seen the likes of."

With *Evil Dead* closing in on a distribution deal that should bring it to theaters by this January, all three men are looking forward to their next project, now well into preproduction. Producer Tapert tells us that it's still not determined whether this film will be another locally-financed, Detroit-based production—too many variables remain on the eve of *Evil Dead*'s release. Campbell tells us that his character in the new film will be similar to his last—"another do-gooder, battling evil, only less of a wimp."

Sam Raimi, the writer-director of *Evil Dead*, promises that the next one will stick to the letter of the law. "There are three laws," he says. "Law number one is The Innocent Must Suffer. Law number two is The Guilty Must Be Punished. And the third law is You Must Taste Blood To Be A Man. We're working now on a fourth law, The Dead shall Walk; but we're not sure yet whether it's universal. We're still checking to see if it applies in every case."

SCORSESE ON CRONENBERG

A film industry giant explains why his imagination is haunted and hounded by the films of a certain Canadian.

By Martin Scorsese as told to Jay Cocks

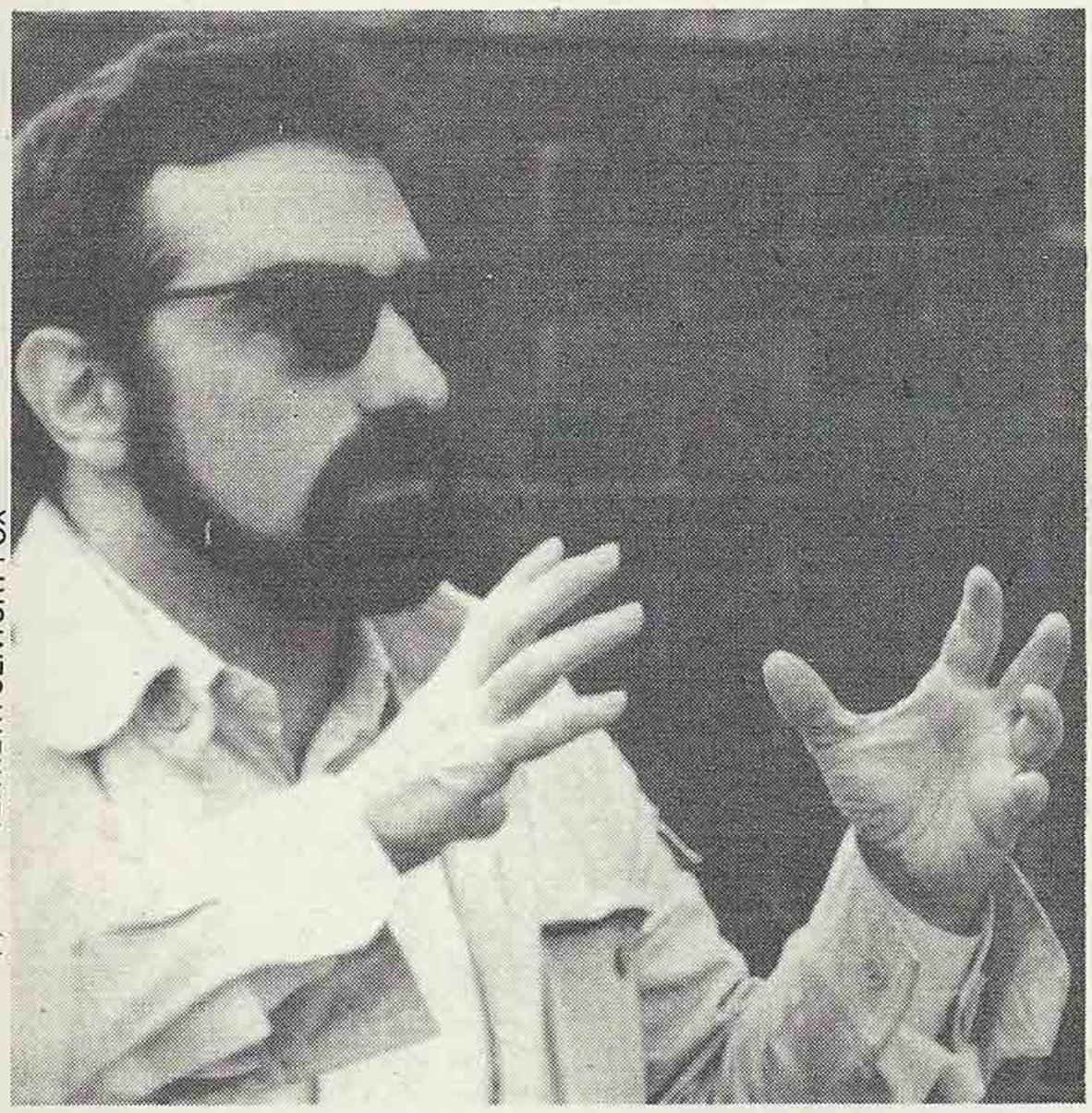


PHOTO: (c) 1983 TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX

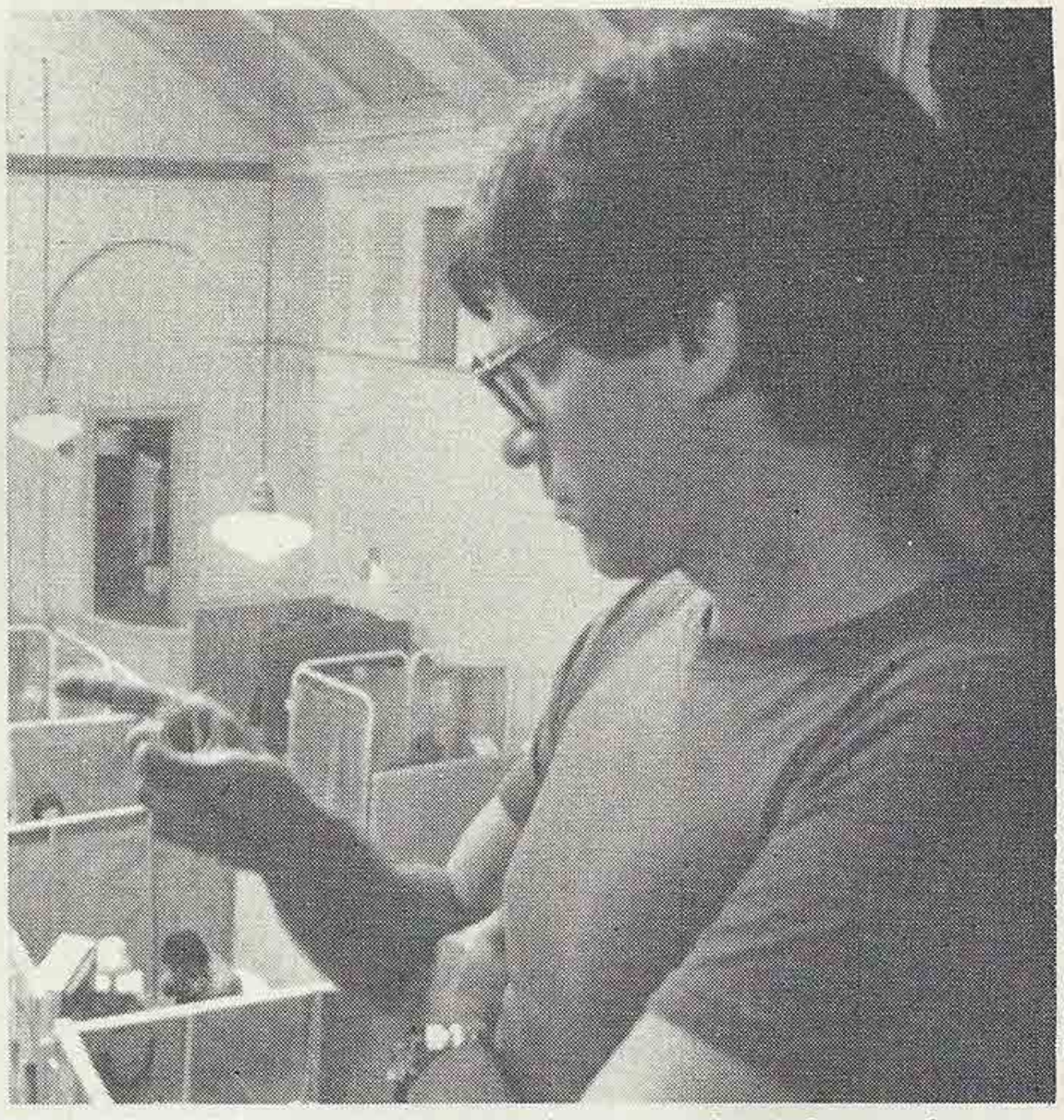


PHOTO: (c) 1982 UNIVERSAL

Martin Scorsese (left) tries to come to grips with the disturbing films of David Cronenberg, seen here, on the right, on the set of *Videodrome*.

Editor's Note: For the recent Cronenberg retrospective at the Toronto Film Festival, Martin Scorsese prepared the following brief essay on the obsessional allure of the films of David Cronenberg. Contacted while scouting locations for his forthcoming film adaptation of Nikos Kazantzakis' *The Last Temptation of Christ,* Scorsese kindly granted permission for us to present his remarks in these pages.

It was opening night, a very august occasion at the 1975 Edinburgh Film Festival. I showed up for a retrospective of my films—all two of them—and attended opening night out of a sense of ceremony.

I never look forward to opening nights of film festivals. They're like fund-raising rallies, and the movies they show on those occasions usually have titles like *How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman.* They're usually movies that almost everyone can like, at least a little bit.

In Edinburgh, that year, the opening attraction was the work of someone I'd never heard of—nothing unusual in that—named David Cronenberg. The title was *The Parasite Murderer's* (AKA *Shivers.*) This was beginning to sound interesting.

The festival director, Lynda Myles, had assured me that there was "a Cronenberg cult" and that "word-of-mouth" (or "W.O.M." to certain sordid Hollywood types) was "to say the least, unusual." This was beginning to sound very interesting.

I took my opening-night seat and watched the credits, which looked like a commercial on a local late-night movie. Then, after the credits, I watched a little more and started to wonder what this Cronenberg cult could have looked like. Thick glasses, runny noses, celibate since birth and probably Communists, for all we knew.

I made it through the rest of the movie in an ever-increasing stupor of shock and depression. When it ended, I thought I didn't like it. But a year later, I found myself still thinking

PHOTO: (c) 1979 NEW WORLD

about it and talking about it to anyone who would listen.

To be blunt, there were a lot of people who wouldn't listen. Cronenberg was a strange name, and my friends were dubious about the Canadian cinema anyway. Still, I kept talking, maybe as a way of exorcising Cronenberg's images.

Well, I've never exorcised any of them. The last scene of *The Parasite Murders*, with the cast going out to infect the entire world with sexual dementia, is something I've never been able to shake. It's an ending that is genuinely shocking, subversive, surrealistic and probably something we all deserve.

It did seem to take a little while for the word on Cronenberg to get around, though. Maybe the Cronenberg cult was too wrapped up with other things—like maybe mass murder—to go out and preach the gospel, although there was word of other Cronenberg films. They, of course, were impossible to see.

Anyway, by 1978, when *The Last Waltz* played the Toronto Film Festival, I was asked if there were any Canadian filmmakers I'd especially like to invite to the showing. I told my friend Robbie Robertson, who was at the Festival as a juror (a pretty amusing concept in itself), to invite Cronenberg. I was getting annoyed at what I sensed was a certain kind of perhaps inadvertent supression of Cronenberg's movies.

Robbie told me later that Cronenberg didn't go to *The Last Waltz*. "Why?" I said. "Well," said Robbie, a little incredulous himself, "they said they couldn't find him."

Well, I'm glad he's finally been ferreted out. I've seen *The Brood, Scannners* and *Videodrome* in intervening years. I'm too cowed to look at *The Parasite Murders* a second time, never mind *The Brood*. They're just too disturbing. Cronenberg's best movies still have the capacity to cause a sort of Jungian culture shock. They're like Bunuel, or Francis Bacon: wit and trauma, savagery and pity. Within what for most people is a very restrictive genre, Cronenberg has come up with a vision that is genuinely original. Internal metaphors, external horror.

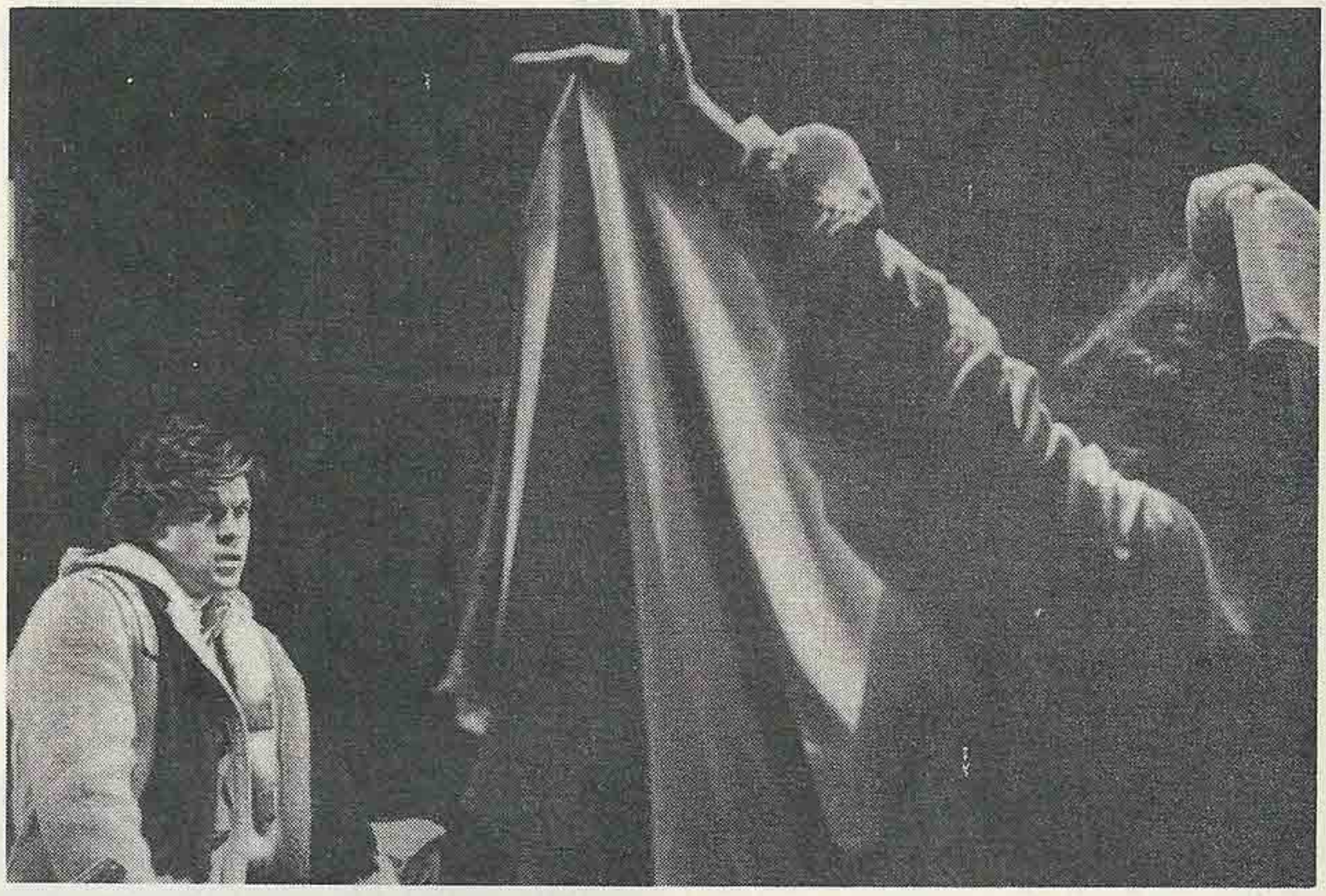
I've also had a chance to strike up a friendship with David, whom I would never have cast to play himself. I expected somebody who looked like a combination of Arthur Bremmer and Dwight Frye as Renfield in *Dracula*, slobbering for juicy flies. The man who showed up in my apartment in New York looked like a gynecologist from Beverly Hills.

We had a pleasant dinner, even though there was a certain tension on my part, probably originating in my expectation that David's veins would pop open and his head would explode. Later, as a birthday gift, David sent me a copy of his uncut *Brood*. He said it was his version of *Kramer vs. Kramer*.

I think a lot about his movies. I wish I didn't. I look forward to the new ones. I wish I didn't. They still have the old power.

BROOD PHOTOS: (c) 1979 NEW WORLD

A teacher is pummeled to death by the fiendish little creatures known as *The Brood*.



Samantha Eggar lets Art Hindle witness the miracle of birth—Cronenberg-style.

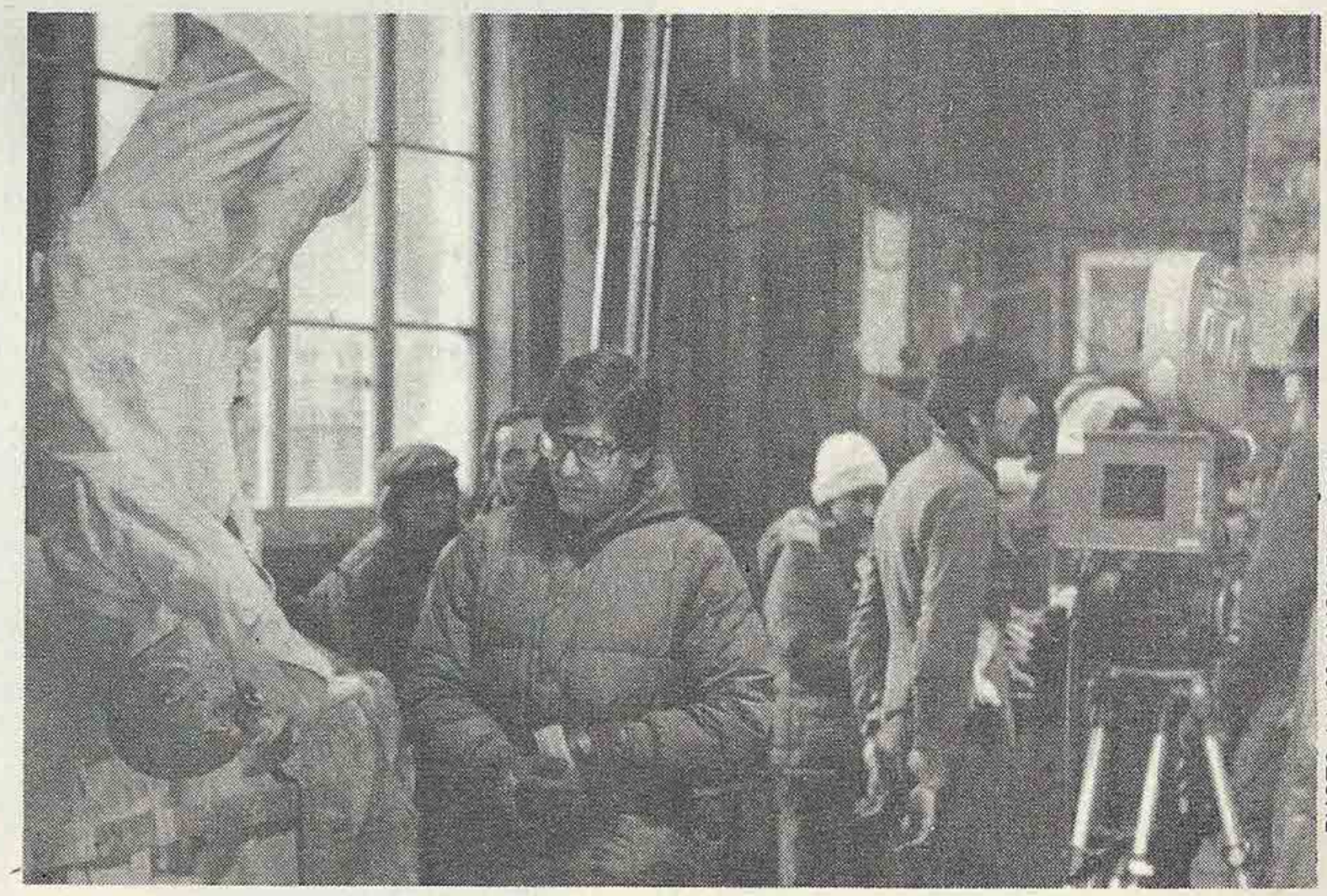


PHOTO: (c) 1981 AVCO EMBASSY

Cronenberg hard at work creating more unsettling visions in *Scanners*.

THE FABULOUS MILLERS OF THE TWILIGHT ZONE

George Miller

From Chinchilla, Australia to 20,000 Feet

By Brick Thornshaw

Preparing for my interview with George Miller, I pulled out my trusty atlas and looked up the town of his birth, Chinchilla, Australia. It wasn't there.

This oversight will have to be corrected in future editions—no matter how tiny the town. Certainly the birthplace of the writer-director responsible for *Mad Max, The Road Warrior* and the best sequence (so we're told; we're waiting to see it) in Warner Brothers' *Twilight Zone* film is worth the small amount of ink it takes to put one more dot on the map.

Below the equator, where the natives somehow got everything backwards, Chinchilla is located in Australia's "Deep North," the equivalent of our own Deep South. "There was no television in Australia then," says Miller, recalling his wonder years, "so, apart from comic books, the only way we learned about the outside world was the Saturday matinee. My parents were fairly indulgent; after the first time I went, it became a weekly ritual. I suppose it started then."

What started was Miller's lifelong love affair with movies, which at the time meant mostly American films; serials, Westerns and other programmers deemed suitable for children. His longest-lived memory of a film image is that of Toad of Toad Hall going motor-crazy in the Disney short based on "Wind in the Willows"; his first memory of being frightened by anything in the movies was the work of The Three Stooges. "Moe really put the fear of God into me," he says.

Certainly such early influences explain practically anything; but soon enough, Miller's filmic horizons expanded beyond Toad Hall and the terrors of Moe Howard, particularly when he relocated to Sydney, to study medicine at the University of New South Wales. "I had never planned on a career in films," Miller says, "but you might say that I started a sort of 'invisible apprenticeship' at that time, indulging my interest in movies rather thoroughly.

"For six years I was in medical school, I was with my twin brother, in the same class as I was; he would take all the lectures down, and I would go to the movies. I saw a movie just about every day. I recall my very best day of moviegoing as the time I saw *M.A.S.H.* twice, and that evening went to see *The Battle of Algiers*. And I recall thinking, on that day, how exciting it would be to be actually involved in the making of films.

"In Australia, it's easy to get into film work for television. But the budgets are so low, that

PHOTO: © 1983 WARNER BROS. INC.

it almost doesn't qualify as film, it's just recording events, which didn't interest me. Then, when we were preparing for final exams, my younger brother came by to tell me there was a film competition at the university, where the participants would have one hour in a room to make a silent, one-minute, black and white film, cut in the camera. So we devised a little film for that; my brother entered and won the competition."

The competition's prize was free attendance at a month-long film workshop, organized by Robin Glove (the future wife of artist Ron Cobb). "I thought, 'Why should he be going and not me? He's not the one that's interested in films!' " says Miller. "So I went to Melbourne, where the workshop was, and talked my way in. I made two short films while I was there, and there's been no turning back—there was just nothing else I wanted to do in life."

It was at that workshop that Miller met Byron Kennedy, another Australian bitten by the film bug. Together, they made a short film, *Violence in Cinema: Part One* which, with graphic special effects, examined in mock-seriousness the significance of slow-motion dying in the films of Sam Peckinpah, and other similar topics.

Following the completion of the short, Miller began hatching plans for a low-budget feature; the fact that no features were being made in Australia at that time for any budget may have slowed him down a bit, but it didn't stop him. Through the early 70's Miller practiced as a physician weekdays; weekends he developed script after script, including plans for a low-budget thriller inspired by *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*. Australia's answer to the gill-man never surfaced, and many other projects were consigned to the deep before the Miller-Kennedy team came up with their first feature: Australia's first international box office smash, *Mad Max*.

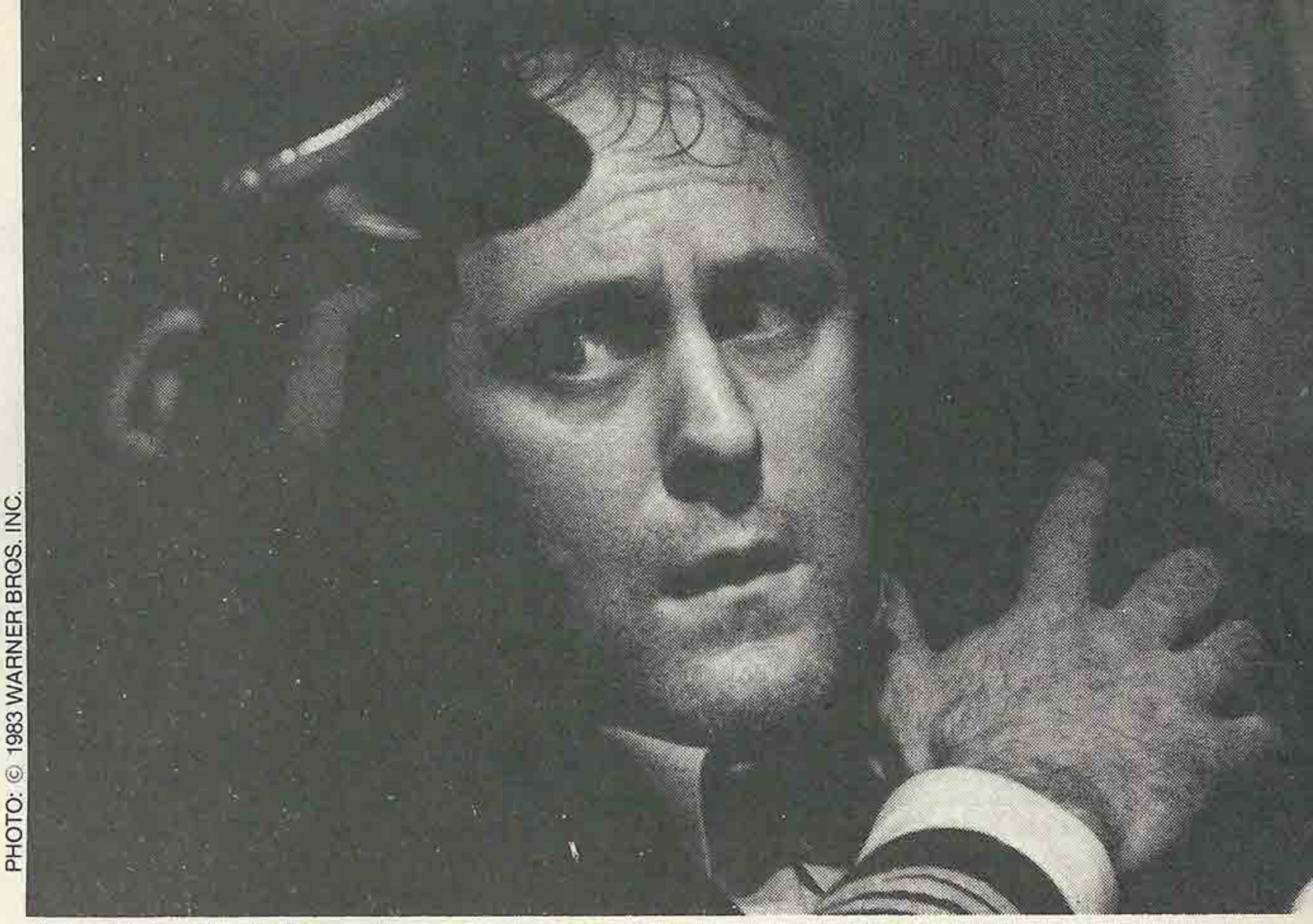


PHOTO: © 1983 WARNER BROS. INC.

John Valentine (Lithgow), a man convinced that he saw a Craig Reardon makeup job on the wing of an airliner!

"We have a very strong car culture in Australia," says Miller, explaining Max's origin. "We don't have a gun culture at all, no hand guns. But we have a big country with a relatively small population, connected by vast expanses of road that remain essentially unpoliced. One result that I first noticed working in casualty wards, and which always bewildered me, is that we've come to accept an enormous highway death toll. So *Mad Max* sort of grew out of a reaction to that.

"Originally, the story was to be set in the present time, but it grew into the idea of doing a Western on wheels, the sort of exaggerated story that required a stylized setting, and a different feeling of time and place."

In the U.S., New World Pictures' release of *Mad Max* did not break any box office records, which can partly be attributed to NW's slim distribution, and to their rather silly decision to redub it with American accents. And, while *MM* was certainly a decent enough action picture, *The Road Warrior/ Mad Max 2* left it eating dust. If *Mad Max* was a promising debut, Max's return was the fulfillment of that promise, and then some.

Miller says that many factors account for the quantum jump in the appeal of the two films "but, bottom line, the first film was a production nightmare, made for $350,000 Australian, roughly equivalent to the same in American dollars; I had never been on a feature film set before, let alone directed a feature; neither of us had ever written a screenplay before, so we had a very flawed, problematical screenplay; Byron Kennedy has never produced a feature before; we had a young, inexperienced cast and crew as well. So we were all going into something that none of us had any experience with. Then, though in retrospect it didn't affect production as much as it seemed it would, six days into the shoot the leading actress and the stunt coordinator were commuting in one morning and hit a truck; both broke their legs. So we had no leading actress, and we had no stunt coordinator—our already tight schedule went out the window, and it seemed more a job of salvage than anything else."

Miller learned a lot on set, but he feels the lesson was drummed in during the year spent editing the picture. "We cut the film virtually in our apartment; Byron was cutting the sound in the lounge, while I cut the film, shot in 35 and reduced to a 16 work print, in the kitchen. As editor, I had to personally confront all the mistakes I had made as director, day after day.

"I think that experience contributed a great deal to the second film. *Road Warrior* was done in a real hurry; we were writing during the shoot on that, and it was a much more complex picture. But we were more experienced, and we worked with a more experienced crew and a bigger budget."

We could, of course, rattle on about Max movies for days, and never get to Miller's participation in *The TZ Movie*. "We had the series in Australia," Miller says, "and it was regarded as almost a textbook for doing film on a limited budget. There was a beautifully understated way of doing things, like suggesting an entire vast audience by showing certain individuals, and perhaps a row of hands applauding. Many of the stories were done using just one set.

"In fact, it had been a thought of mine a couple of years back—'wouldn't it be great if someone put together a *Twilight Zone* feature, almost as a tribute?' "

As Miller tells it, his involvement in the pro-

Charles Knapp, as a police inspector, offers the co-pilot his help in dealing with the unruly passenger.

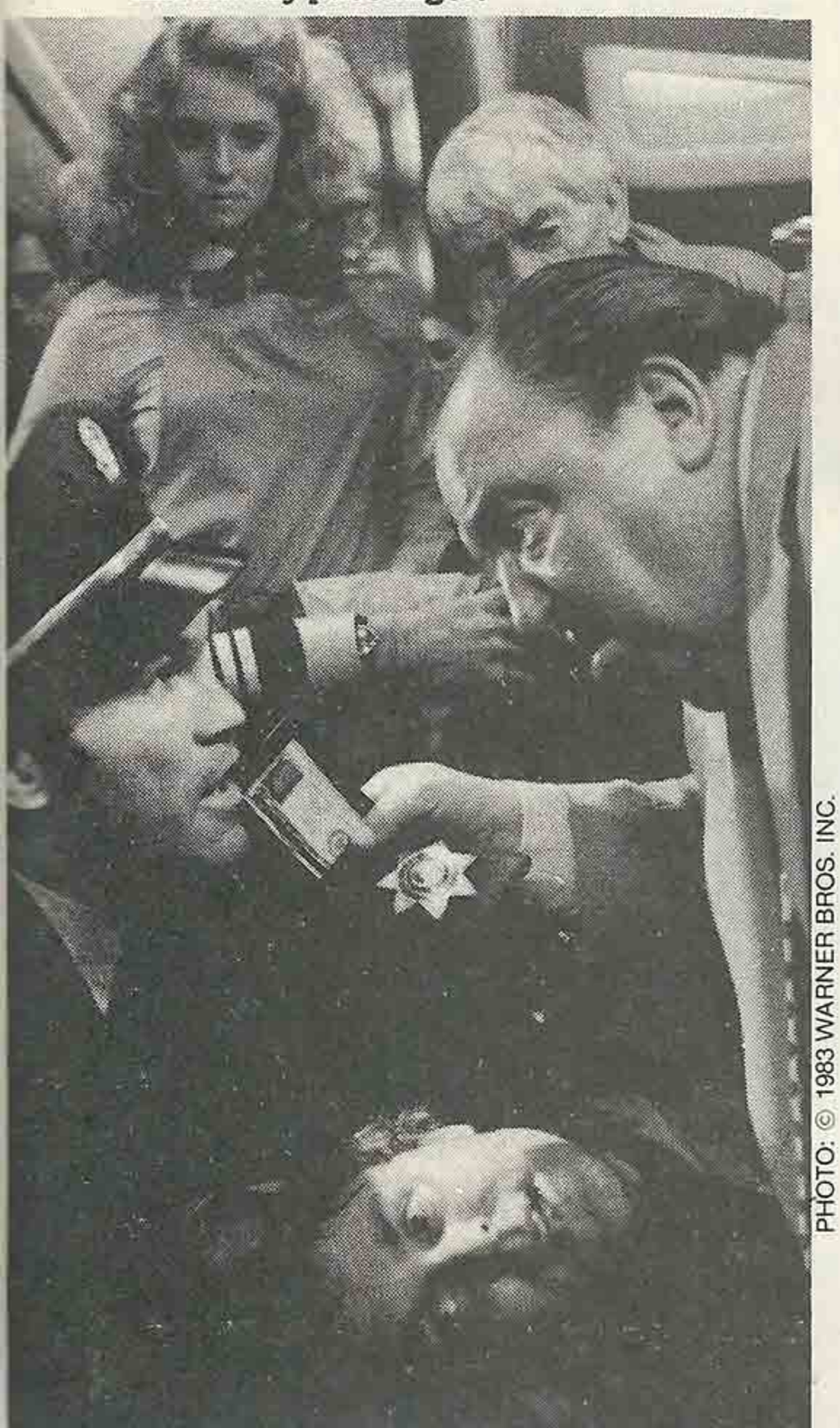


PHOTO: © 1983 WARNER BROS. INC.

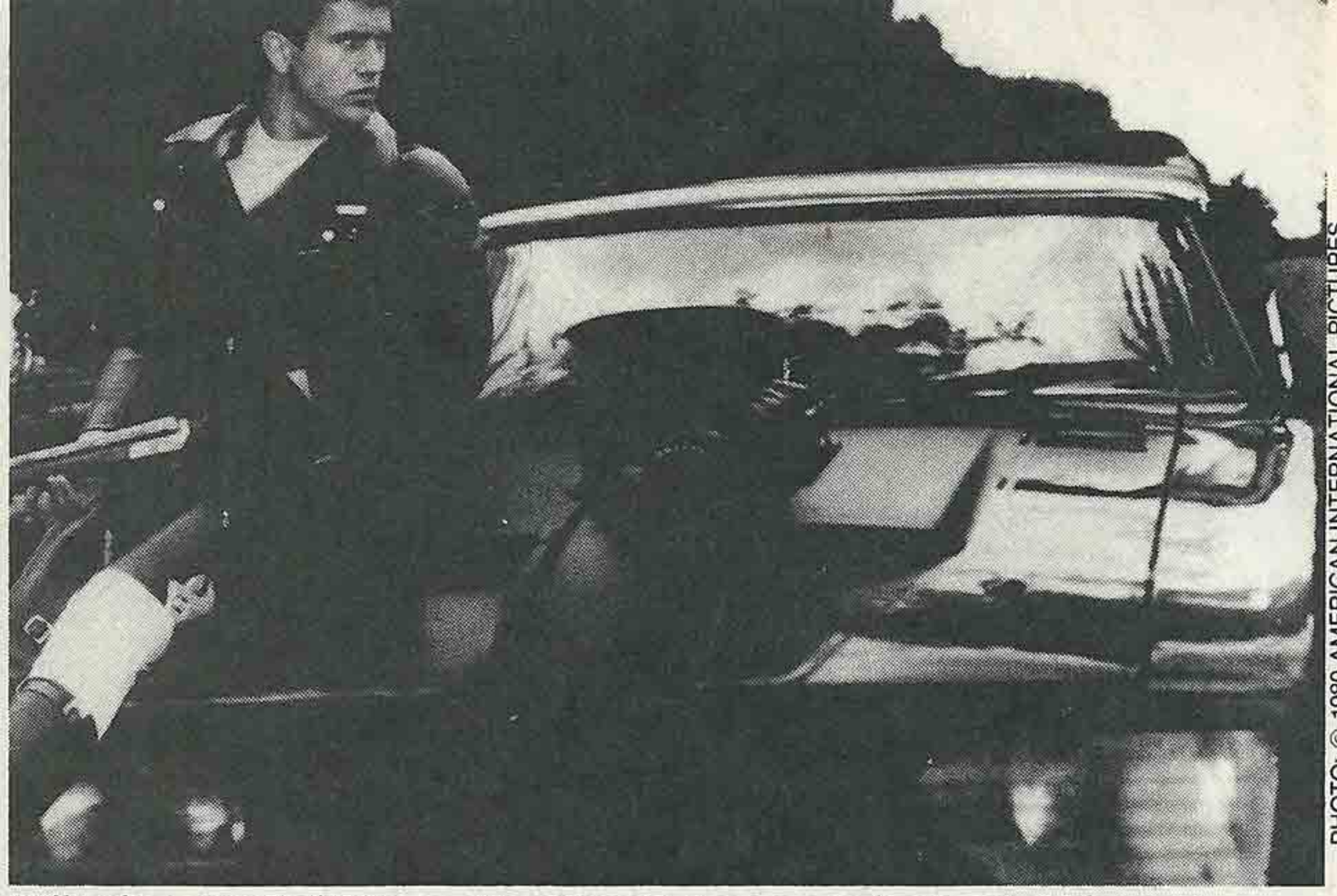


PHOTO: © 1980 AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL PICTURES

Miller discovery Mel Gibson—Max himself—lounges on the hood of his supercharged pursuit vehicle.

ject happened entirely by happenstance. Spielberg had seen *Road Warrior* prior to its U.S. release and liked it, so an open invitation was forwarded to Miller in Australia by Kathy Kennedy, Spielberg's good right hand and the producer of *E.T.* It so happened that Miller's next L.A. trip coincided with the gestation of the *Twilight Zone* project. Miller arrived at the Spielberg offices during an early production meeting, including Landis, Dante, Matheson and Kennedy. "They invited me to sit in on the meeting, just like that. Up to that time, it had been planned to do three stories, and now they'd decided to do a fourth. 'Why don't you do one?' someone said. I wasn't sure that they weren't having me on at the time . . . . I mean, is this the way they do things in Hollywood? They assured me that it wasn't, but they were serious."

Because Matheson was occupied by rewrites for the other episodes, Miller was able to take a strong, uncredited hand in the scripting chores for his own, based on the Matheson-scripted *TZ* episode "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet," based in turn on Matheson's own short story concerning a man (William Shatner in the TV version) who sees a gremlin ripping apart the engine of the airplane on which he is travelling—much to the disbelief of his fellow passengers. Miller's first step was to read the story, and to screen Richard Donner's 1963 television version. "We decided to go back to the short story for certain elements, " Miller says. "For instance, the Shatner character was travelling with his wife, a character that was not in the short story, and for that reason the story was much more internalized, and more frightening. Of course, it makes telling the story a bit harder, but that's the way we chose to do it." Miller credits the success of this approach to the work of John Lithgow—known to terror fans as the stone-cold killer of *Blow-Out*, and known to movie audiences everywhere as Roberta Muldoon, the transvestite football player of *The World According to GARP*.

The episode also returned to the story's concept in the monster design; Matheson had often declared his feeling that the creature in the TV episode resembled a Teddy Bear, while his story described a trollish, but humanoid, creature. Makeup artist Craig Reardon delivered a gremlin entirely faithful to Matheson's conception.

With a two-week schedule, Miller proceeded to shoot the story. In a previous interview I conducted with Richard Donner for *Twilight Zone* magazine, Donner had recalled the shooting of that episode as a tactical nightmare, particularly the effects sequences, with stuntman Nick Cravat standing on an elevated mock-up of an airplane wing, buffeted by artificial wind, rain and lightning. "It's funny you should mention that," Miller responds, "because, shortly after we finished shooting, someone showed me a book called *The Twilight Zone Companion*, and of course, I immediately looked up 'Nightmare at 20,000 Feet.' There were Richard Donner's words, describing exactly what I had just gone through!"

With *Twilight Zone* completed, Miller looks forward to his return to Australia, to begin his next collaboration with Terry Hayes, co-writer on *The Road Warrior*. "We've been trying to get together to write something more for a year now, but things have prevented it—the release of *The Road Warrior* and now *Twilight Zone*. There are several things I'd like to do, but I won't be sure just what it will be until we actually start writing."

Could the reunion of the *Road Warrior* writers result in a *Mad Max 3*? Certainly the pressure to produce another Max tale must be on. "There is always a great deal of pressure in these situations," says Miller, "from the distributors and from investors. Working against that is the fact that it's an Herculean task to make a film, a huge investment of time and energy; no amount of money could bring you to make a film unless you're worked up about it. I resisted a tremendous amount of pressure to make *Mad Max 2*. I wanted to do something different, and started working with Terry Hayes on a screenplay called *Roxanne*, concerning two teenage girls. While we worked on that, *Mad Max* proceeded to become a very successful picture just about everywhere except in the U.S. and Canada, quite out of proportion to what a low-budget exploitation picture usually does. We began to discuss it, and I realized that we had re-created a hero mythology. I called it a Western on wheels, but it could also be seen as a samurai picture on wheels, though I'd never seen a samurai film before making *Mad Max*, and an Icelandic filmmaker told me of its similiarity to the Viking myths. We started to become excited about what *Mad Max* could have been, and we had a chance to do that with *Road Warrior*. In order to do a *Mad Max 3*, we would need something that's similiarly exciting to us, to allow us to go beyond *The Road Warrior* in the same way that *Road Warrior* went beyond *Mad Max*."

But Miller is at that point where, for the sake of his own career freedom, he is eager to do something different. Will Max remain forever standing by that deserted stretch of roadway winding through the wastelands? A career is a long time . . .

Lithgow as de Palma's stone cold killer in *Blow-Out*.

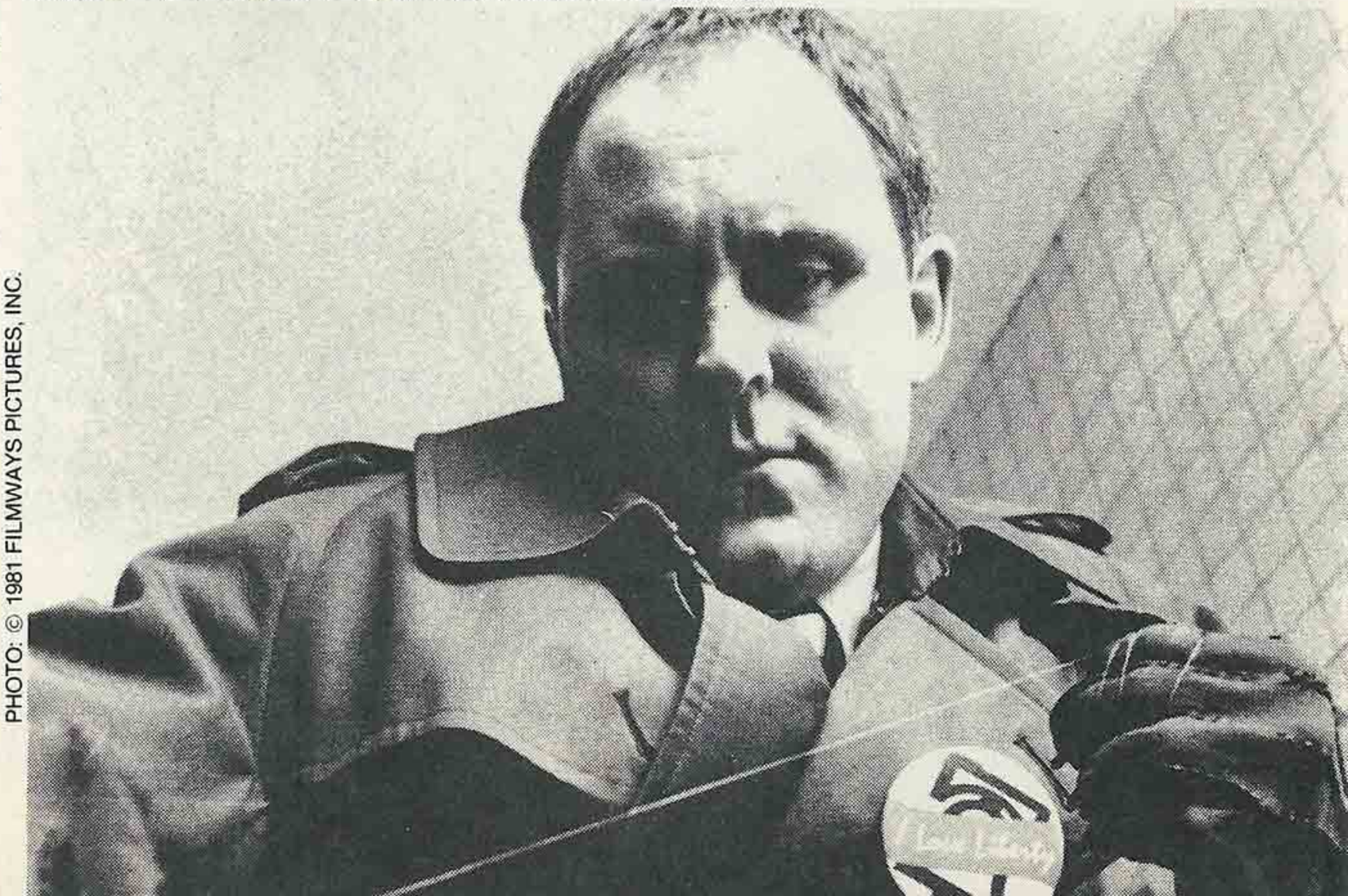


PHOTO: © 1981 FILMWAYS PICTURES, INC.

The Dick Miller Zone

The Exclusive Interview that Playboy Couldn't Get

By David Everitt

There's a sign on the wall in Dick Miller's den that reads: WALTER PAISLEY—PROPRIETOR. The sign appears in Miller's scene in the Joe Dante episode of *Twilight Zone* and it was given to Miller by his director at the end of the shoot; this prop demonstrates that another tradition in addition to that of Rod Serling fantasy is being perpetuated by this summer's big horror film from Warner Bros. Miller first played Walter Paisley in Roger Corman's 1959 horror spoof *Bucket of Blood* and the name was resurrected by Joe Dante for Miller's role in *Hollywood Boulevard* in 1977. Since then, Miller has continued to go by the Walter moniker in Dante's monster pictures *Piranha* and *The Howling,* and now *Twilight Zone* marks the introduction of Walter Paisley into major studio productions.

In the "It's a Good Life" segment of *Twilight Zone,* Miller, who has entertained horror fans in the past with his performances in such quickies as *War of the Satellites* and *Little Shop of Horrors*, plays a guy named Walter who owns a roadside diner. Into this diner comes Kathleen Quinlan, asking for directions. Also in Walter's place is Jeremy Licht, the kid with terrible mental powers, and two guys watching a boxing match on TV, or trying to watch, as Licht mentally creates havoc with the broadcast. Fans of the *Twilight Zone* TV series will probably notice that one of the boxing fans is none other than Billy Mummy, the former child actor who played the diabolical kid in the original television *TZ* version of "It's a Good Life" some 20 years ago.

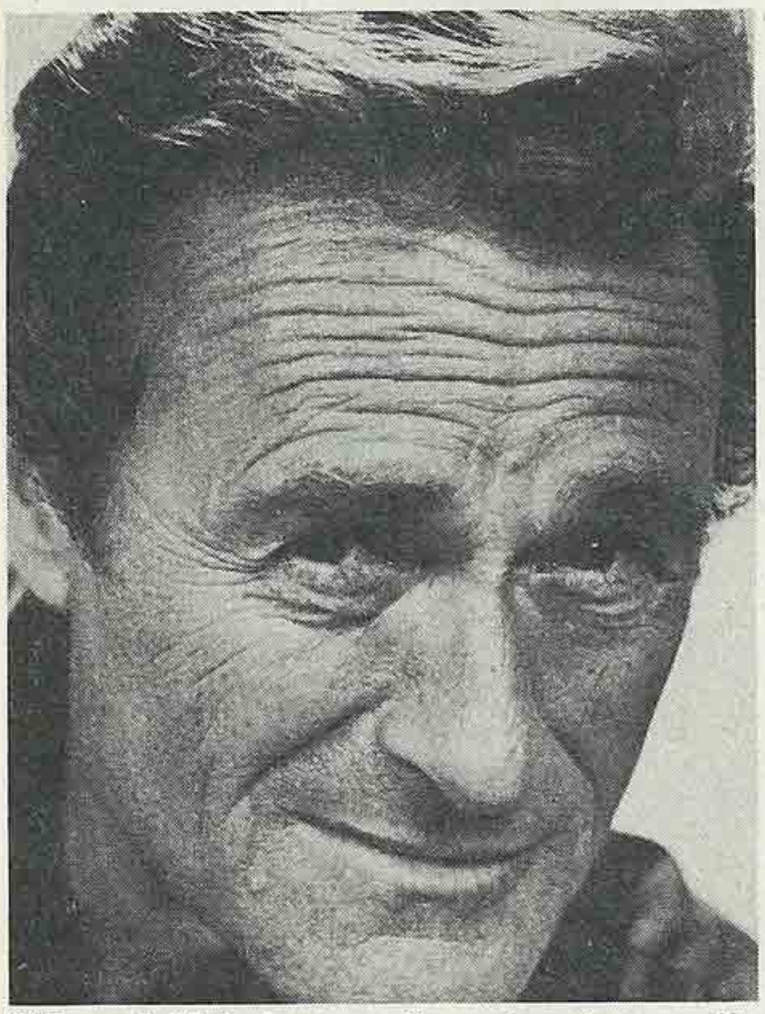
As usual, even though he has only one scene in the picture, Miller manages to make an impression on viewers with a distinctive characterization. He adds some earthy color to the part as Walter helps the lost Quinlan: "I play him a little younger than myself, actually," he says with a laugh. "He kind of hits on her. While we were filming, Joe said, 'That's marvelous—if we were doing a story of you and her, but, you know, try to tame it down.' Even so, he's a little more interested in her than the ordinary luncheonette counter-man would be."

The three pictures on which Miller has previously worked with Dante have all been small independent features. Does he notice any difference in the way Dante works now that the director is part of a studio project? "No, Joe is Joe," Miller says, "and that's why he is the fine director that he is. I used to be glib about him; I used to say 'Joe is one of the best young directors in town,' but the more I work with him, seeing him on bigger pictures, I see how *truly* a fine director he is. I think his technique toward directing, the qualities that make him a good director, wouldn't change. I've heard of other directors who get shots at big money and big productions, and they really don't know how to utilize the extra time. Joe apparently does. And there's a certain amount of confidence that comes with procuring the bigger projects. Once someone starts to trust you with that kind of time and money, you develop a certain belief in yourself. I guess at the beginning there are fears of 'Do I deserve it?' but, if those fears were there, they were not apparent on the set. I really see the confidence now in Joe on *Gremlins* which is much larger than *Twilight Zone*. He really seems to be feeling his oats. He *knows* what he's doing."

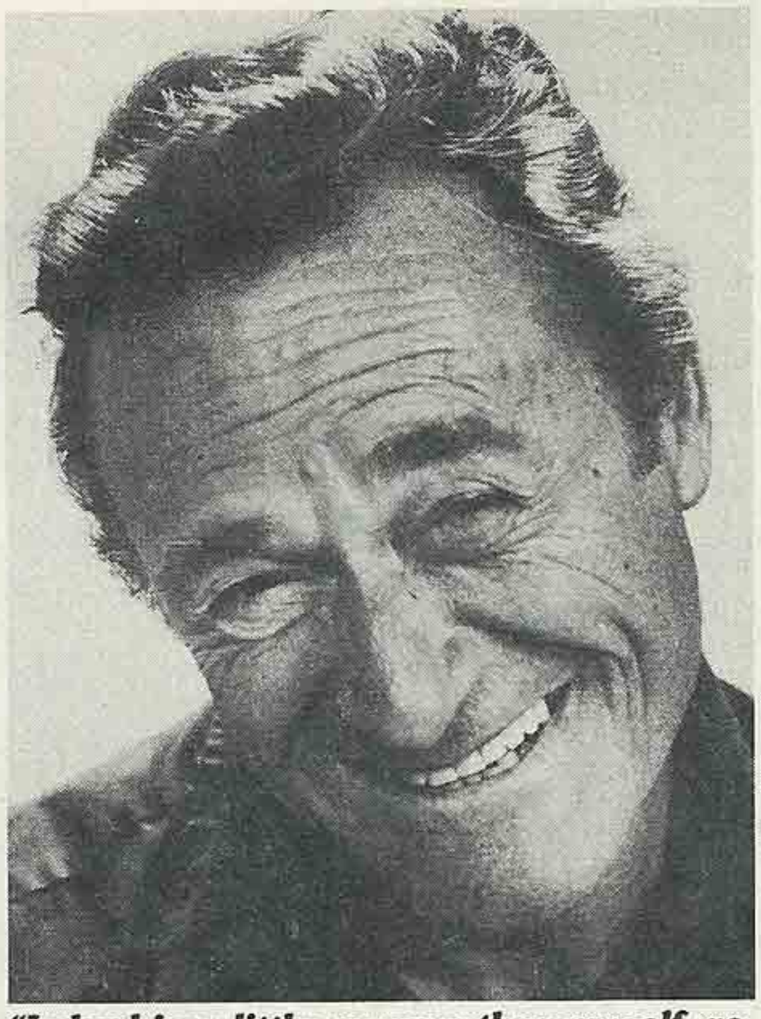
Gremlins is a new fantasy currently in production that is being produced by Steven Spielberg and directed by Dante. Information on this film right now is closely guarded but Miller was able to say "it's about the embodiment of the old idea of gremlins; when I was a kid in World War II, gremlins were supposed to be little invisible imps that screwed up airplanes. Well, they're not invisible in this one. They're very visible and really strange little creatures."

In *Gremlins,* for the first time in a Joe Dante movie, Miller will not play Walter Paisley. Instead, he is Mr. Futterman, a man who runs a snow plough in the winter who is the first person to suspect that there might be such a thing as gremlins in existence. The casting choice for his wife in the picture, Mrs. Futterman, is of special interest; she will be played by Jackie Joseph, Miller's co-star in *Little Shop of Horrors.* The two Corman veterans were brought back together just recently for Allan Arkush's rock 'n' roll picture *Get Crazy*. According to Miller, they play an Ozzie and Harriet type of couple "who have a young daughter who, they

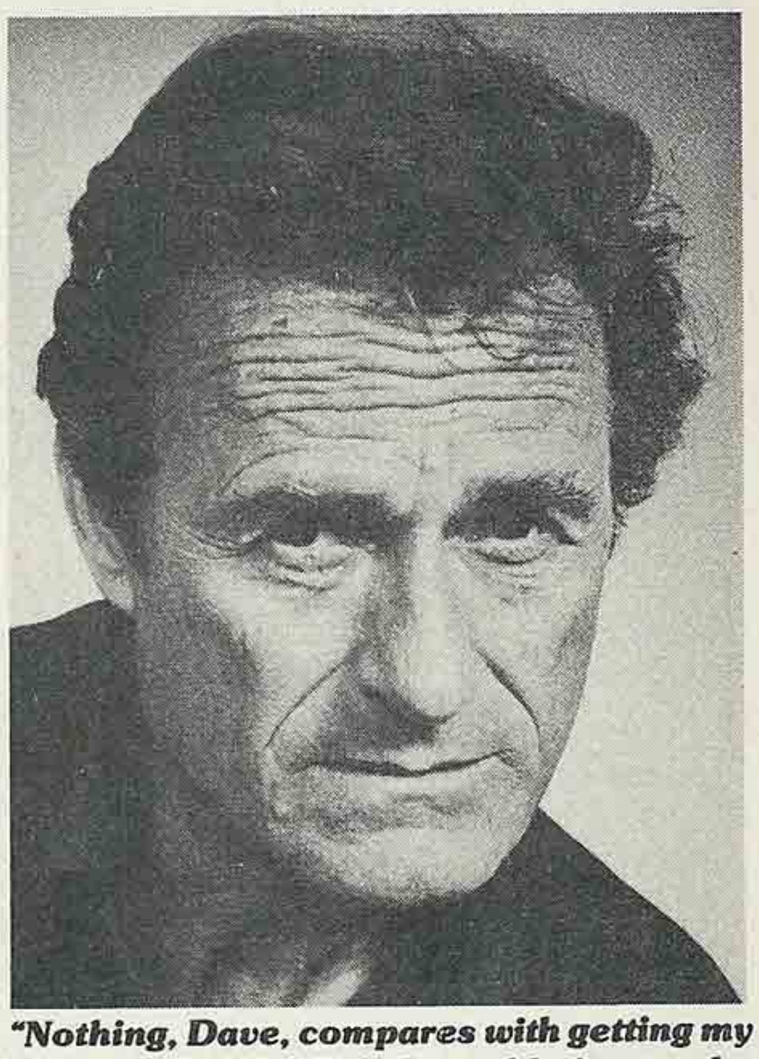
(continued on page 72)



"[Crazy] Mel dresses in polyester, really crummy clothes, but he wears a space helmet, and he sells used rockets to the whole universe through a fast-pitch hologram."



"I play him a little younger than myself, actually. He kind of hits on her."



"Nothing, Dave, compares with getting my name in FANGORIA. I would give up the free trip on the Titanic I'm going to take to get into FANGORIA."

The FX of *The Deadly Spawn*

. . . from New Jersey it came!

By Bob Martin

Dateline—New Jersey. The state that Joe Dante calls home; the cradle of Lee Van Cleef; the sainted site of Jerry Lewis' nativity. "The State of Lots of Good Thing" might be a worthy motto to stamp on Jersey's many, many license plates—and certainly New Jersey's latest gift to the world is not to be considered anything less than an exception. For the hallowed state's latest spawn is one of the deadly kind. . .

John Dods, who co-wrote the film's original story and served as director of special effects, recalls the origin of *The Deadly Spawn*. "Ted Bohus, our producer, called me up one day," says Dods, "and said, 'Hey, let's make ourselves a monster movie.' The only problem we had at that point was, we didn't have any money. But our friend Don Dohler in Baltimore, had managed to finance and make a film called *The Alien Factor*, and had managed to sell it to television, and even make a profit. So Ted figured, and I agreed, why couldn't we do the same thing?"

Neither Bohus nor Dods were entirely without experience at the project's outset; in fact, Dods is quite well-known (famous, almost) among semi-pro filmmakers as the producer-director-writer-animator-designer of a series of short films featuring Grog, a delightfully primitive critter who was briefly featured in the TV special *The Making of The Empire Strikes Back* as an example of the stop-motion animator's art. Bohus, a genuine SF fan and former fanzine publisher, may not have had much producing experience, but he did achieve the goal of procuring financing for the project, and he assembled a crew that included some of the best young filmmaking talent in the East: Dods; makeup artist Arnold Gargiulo (see issues #17 and #22); musician Ken Walker (a former STARLOG contributor, who devised the sound effects for their bind-in SF record in issue #32) to score the film, along with Paul Cornell and Michael Perilstein; and reknowned fantasy artist Tim Hildebrandt, who served as executive producer and made several special contributions to the film's effects and designs.

While the acting and the directing of *The Deadly Spawn* is only passable at best the work of these four gentlemen make the film watchable—and even highly enjoyable, for those of us who like the idea of face-eating mutant creatures from out of space. For, in the time-honored tradition of low-budget monster cinema, the play is not the thing; the "Thing" is the play. It is Dods' hell-raising title creatures, and the havoc they raise in a New Jersey suburb, that gives this film its singular charm.

Dod's first order of business was his collaboration with Bohus on a story, which served as a key tool in obtaining investors; this story was later fleshed out into a somewhat flabby screenplay by director Doug McKeown. Dod's second task—and one that turned out quite a bit better—was the design and construction of the film's highly unpleasant stars. "We wanted something really frightening," says Dods, "and since this was over two years ago, we were probably a little influenced by *Alien*. I decided to give it a lot of teeth, because, to me, that says that it's going to bite you. So taking that to an extreme, we gave it a whole lot of teeth—three heads full of them. We did a number of toothy sketches, discussed them with the director and so forth; I did one more version, which I later sculpted in clay, and

ALL PHOTOS: COURTESY JOHN DODS

Surrounded by a miniature set of his own design, exec producer Tim Hildebrandt gives an oversized spawn a solid tooth-brushing. Opposite page: a voracious alien spawn caught in the act of consuming its off spring.

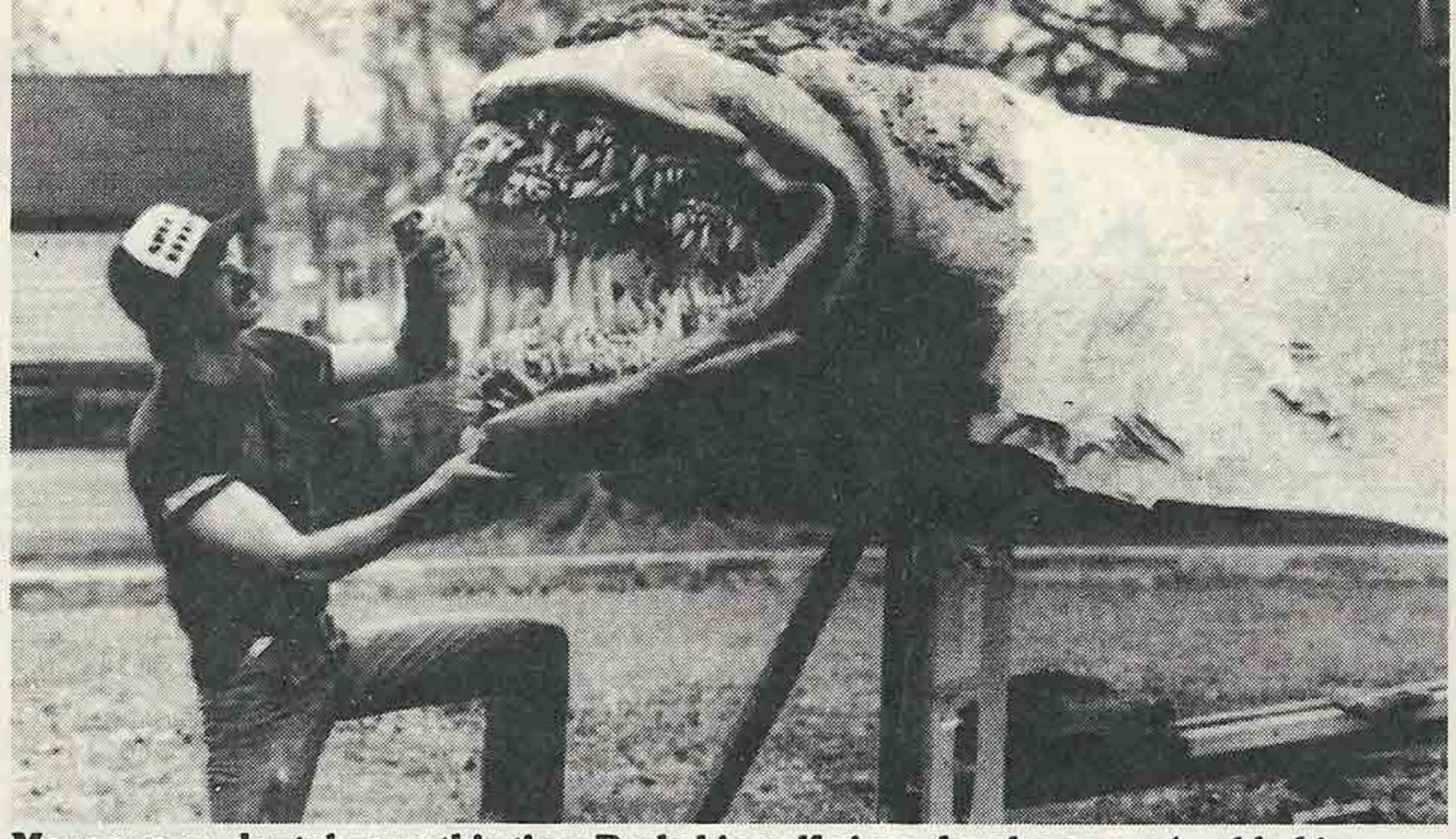
Arnold Gargiulo's 2-layered makeup for Elissa Niel in preparation.

that seemed to strike everyone as pretty awful in the right way." The adult creature was built, along with various other required bits and pieces, over a two month period, by Dods with technician Greg Ramoundas.

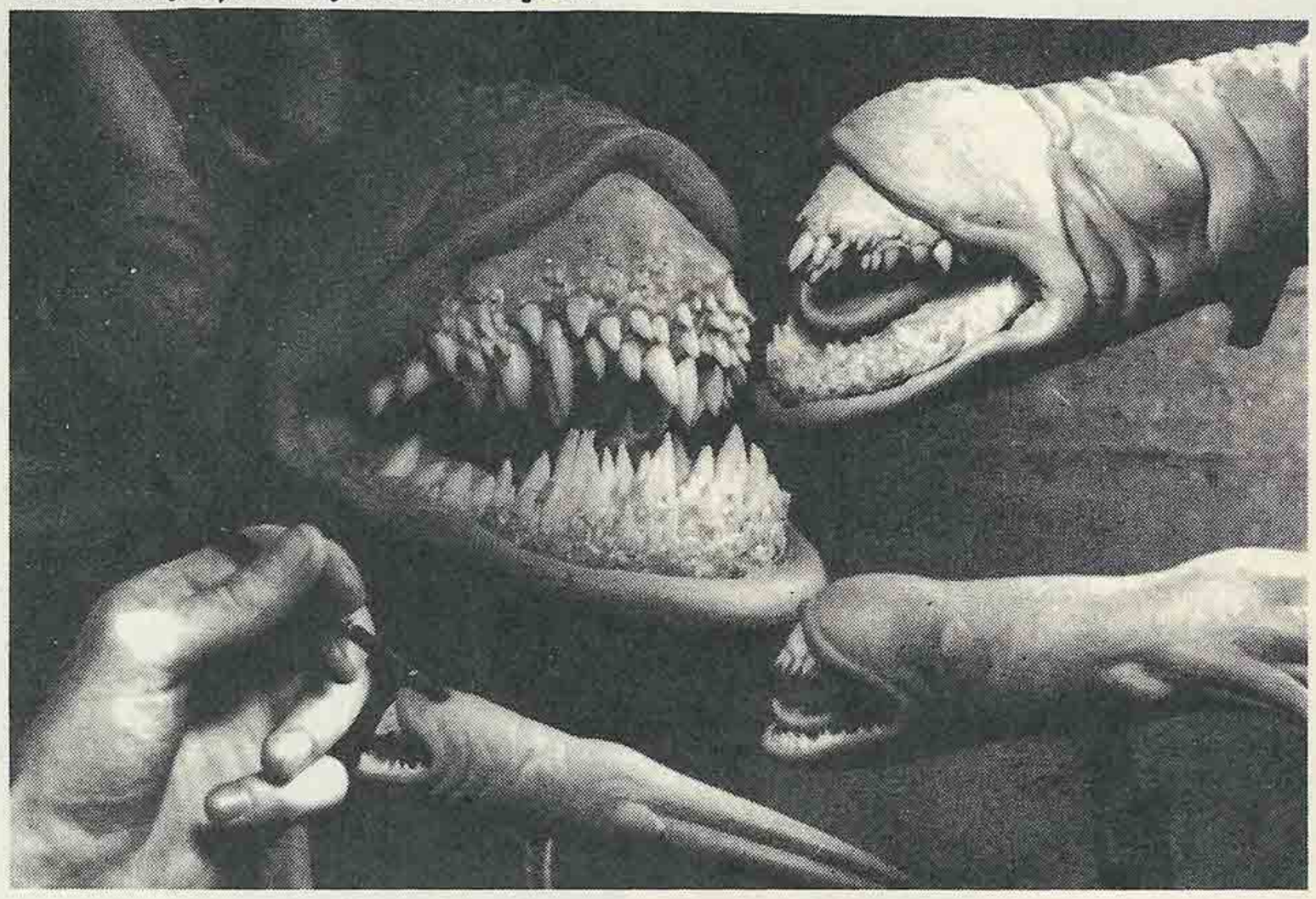
"It was sometime afterwards that we realized that we would not have enough action in the film with just one monster—that was when it ws decided that we would have the monster reproduce, and we populated the film with dozens of rapidly-growing baby spawns; three inches, 12 inches and three feet were our basic sizes for these. Showing them in the various sizes effectively gives the impression that they're all growing up to be as big as their Mama—luckily, the film comes to a conclusion before that actually happens, because that would've been a *real* budgetary problem."

Dods' title, as director of special effects, is one to be taken literally—virtually all of the scenes involving monsters and effects were directed by Dods, following his storyboards. In fact, Bohus' first plan called for Dods and Bohus to collaboratively direct the film themselves. "I was reluctant, at the time," he recalls. "Though I've directed stop-motion films, I've never worked with actors, and you see so many low-budget films that are hurt by bad acting, so I was insistent that we get someone who'd had experience working with actors." The choice of McKeown, who has directed for the New York stage as part of the Jean Cocteau Repertory Theater, did not exactly eliminate that problem, however. Dods now doubts that he would be so reluctant the second time around.

Dods does, however, work singularly well with the monsters of *Deadly Spawn*. One of his primary concerns was the manner of



More spawn dental care; this time Dods himself gives the chompers (molded in dental acrylic) a shiny coat of lacquer.

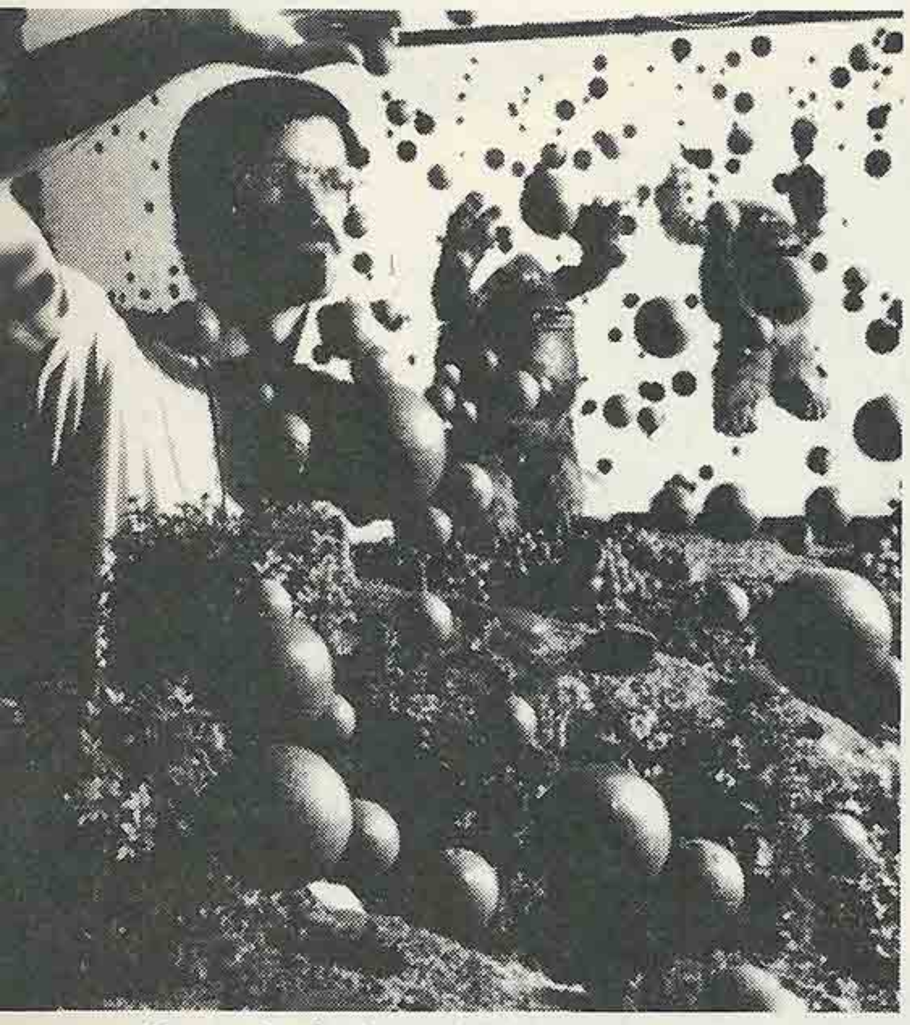


The Four Ages of Spawn, molded in clay by Dods prior to casting.

The cunning-yet-simple manner of the baby spawns' location revealed! Hah!

locomotion used by the various critters. "The mother spawn was herself relatively limited in movement," Dodds says, "but that was okay—she's *supposed* to be a huge, lumbering 3,000-pound *thing*. Her slow movements make sense, so we avoided a whole lot of technical problems right there."

The film does open with a sequence that shows, in silhouette, the adult monster undergoing rapid growth, shortly after killing



A particularly ambitious scene from Dods' *Grog* film *Forest Story* depicted an animated "rain" of fruit.

a pair of campers; simultaneously, various inhuman schlurping sounds are heard on the soundtrack, as it consumes its human meal ("Every sound you hear the monster make came from my mouth," Dods reveals). The manner in which the illusion was accomplished is one of the simplest tricks we've ever come across, one that might spoil the sequence if we were to reveal it (but read this backwards: stuotuc draobdrac depahsretsnom desu yehT). Yet another sequence shows one of the repulsive-yet-somehow-cute baby spawn wiggling through bloody basement waters with the speed of a frightened lizard. "Every monster movie should have one long shot of the monster, showing its method of locomotion," says Dods, "and so many don't have that—they try to get by with fast cutting, or some other technique, to give you the impression of having seen an entire creature in motion. Since my background is in stop-motion, I was planning to use that in order to get such a shot. Using a jigsaw, I cut an S-shaped, repeating wave form, a sort of curved slot. I then mounted a flexible, foam rubber baby spawn on a piece of plastic, and was going to shoot that in stop motion, travelling in that S-shaped curve; but then we found that, if you simply pulled it along in that slot, it travelled in a very lifelike, wiggling fashion, so we wound up shooting it in live action. That way, we could also have it speeding through the water on the basement floor—water is just about impossible to animate."

The swimming spawn, and many of the other effects of *The Deadly Spawn*, were entirely originated by the effects crew; few were specially called for by McKeown's script. "Arnold Gargiulo was particularly good at coming up with things," says Dods. "For instance, it was indicated that the monster would attack Ellisa Niel in the face, but it was figured we'd simply track in, through the monster's point of view, and then pull back to reveal the damage. Arnold came up with much more than he was asked for in several cases; in that scene, he did something I hadn't seen before—a two-layered makeup, with a normal-looking appliance, which the monster rips away to reveal some pretty gruesome work underneath it."

Deadly Spawn's 3-headed title critter in all its glory.

More contributions above and beyond the call of etcetera came from Tim Hildebrandt—including the contribution of his own little spawn, son Charles, as the film's youthful hero. Wife Rita Hildebrandt served in various capacities as well, including the provision of her own recipe for monster saliva—a concoction achieved by mixing water and corn starch and boiling it down to a syrupy goo. Hildebrandt's contributions to the effects are seen in the very beginning and end of the film, in the depiction of the spawn's arrival on earth, and of its final (unless there's a sequel) appearance. The Hildebrandts even sacrificed the attic of their home, which was transformed into a blood-and-debris-spattered mess after the filming of a crucial confrontation scene.

"Though just about all of us have done previous film work, it was a first feature for most, so there were a lot of occasions where we put in an extra effort, to help make it a project worth doing," Dods concludes. To us it seems apparent that, for many of the talented crewmembers of *The Deadly Spawn*, it is merely a beginning, one which holds a great deal of promise—for New Jersey and for the monster movie world.

On Composing for HALLOWEEN

Varese-Sarabande has at last released the fright-film fan's most sought-after soundtrack. We greet the occasion with some words from the composer . . .

By John Carpenter

Jamie Lee prepares to defend herself from the Haddonfield Terror.

The Shape makes an ineffectual attempt to hide behind some convenient foliage.

Halloween was written in approximately 10 days by Debra Hill and myself. It was based on an idea by Irwin Yablans about a killer who stalks babysitters, tentatively titled "The Babysitter Murders" until Yablans suggested that the story could take place on October 31 and *Halloween* might not be such a bad title for an exploitation-horror movie.

I shot *Halloween* in the spring of 1978. It was my third feature and my first out-and-out horror film. I had three weeks of pre-production planning, 20 days of principal photography, and then Tommy Lee Wallace spent the rest of the spring and summer cutting the picture, assisted by Charles Bornstein and myself. I screened the final cut, minus sound effects and music, for a young executive from 20th Century-Fox (I was interviewing for another possible directing job). She wasn't scared at all. I then became determined to "save it with the music."

I had composed and performed the musical scores for my first two features, *Dark Star* and *Assault on Precinct 13*, as well as many student films. I was the fastest and cheapest I could get. My major influences as a composer were Bernard Herrmann and Ennio Morricone (who I had the opportunity to work with on *The Thing*). Herrmann's ability to create an imposing, powerful score with limited orchestral means, using the basic sound of a particular instrument, high strings or low bass, was impressive. His score for *Psycho*, the film that inspired *Halloween*, was primarily all string instruments.

With Herrmann and Morricone in mind, the scoring for *Halloween* began in late June at Sound Arts Studios, then a small brick building in an alley in central Los Angeles. Dan Wyman was my creative consultant. I had worked with him in 1976 on the music for *Assault*. He programmed the synthesizers, oversaw the recording of my frequently imperfect performances, and often joined me to perform a difficult line or speed-up the seemingly never ending process of overdubbing one instrument at a time. I have to credit Dan as *Halloween's* musical co-producer. His fine taste and musicianship polished up the edges of an already minimalistic, rhythm-inspired score.

We were working in what I call the 'double-blind' mode in 1978, which simply

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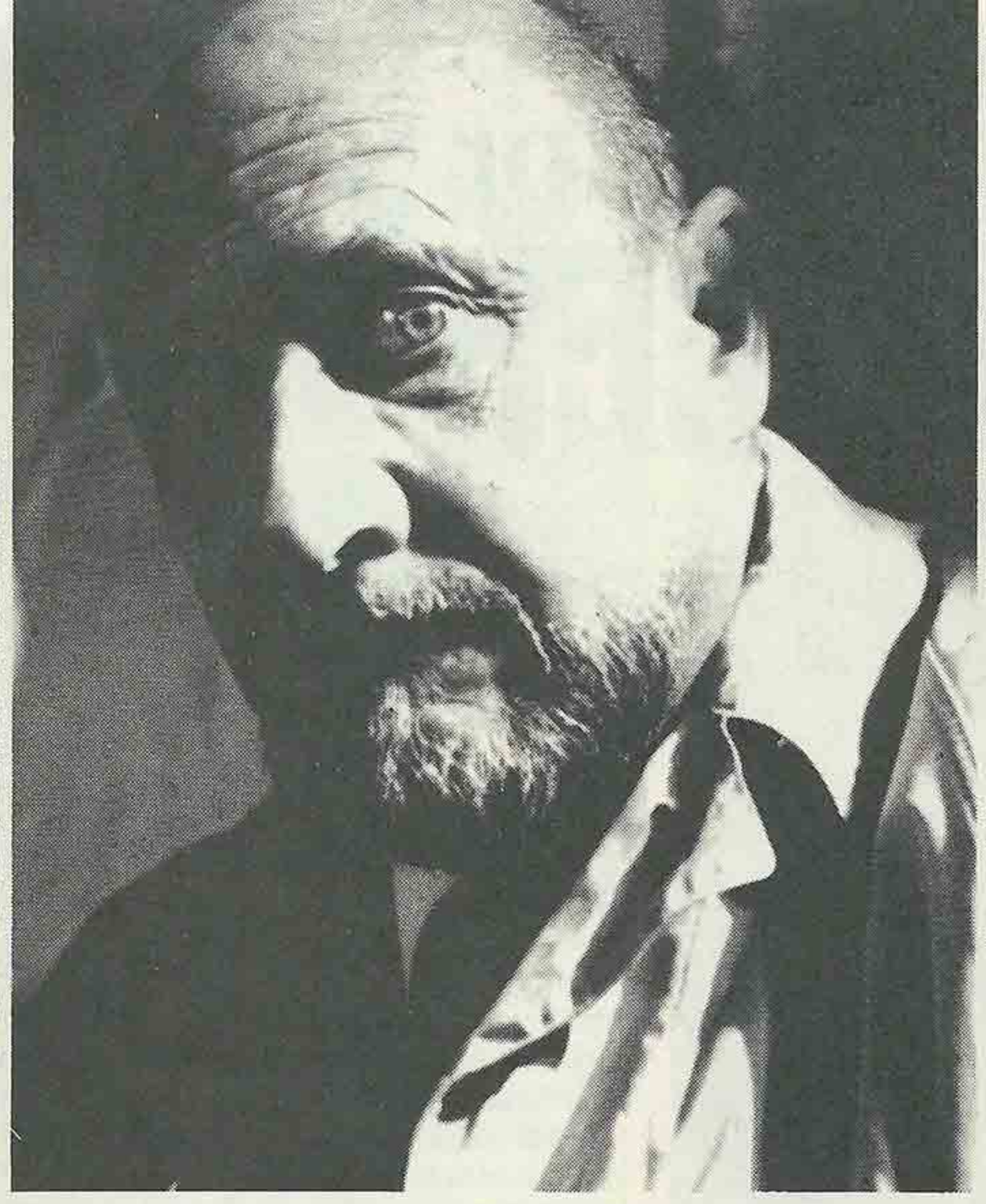


Doc Loomis contemplates the forthcoming mayhem on the night he came home.

Off-camera, the fabulous JLC engages the Shape in an enthusiastic, sisterly lip-lock.

means that the music was composed and peformed in the studio, on the spot, without reference or synchronization to the actual picture. Recently, my association with Alan Howarh has led me to a synchronized video-tape system, a sort of "play it to the TV" approach. *Halloween's* main title theme was the first to go down on tape. The rhythm was inspired by an exercise my father taught me on the bongos in 1961, the beating out of 5-4 time. The themes associated with Laurie (Jamie Lee Curtis) and Dr. Loomis (Donald Pleasence) now seem to be the most Herrmannesque. Finally came the stingers. Emphasizing the visual surprise, they are otherwise known as "the cattle prod": short, percussive sounds placed at opportune moments to startle the audience. I'm now ashamed to admit that I recorded quite so many stingers for this one picture.

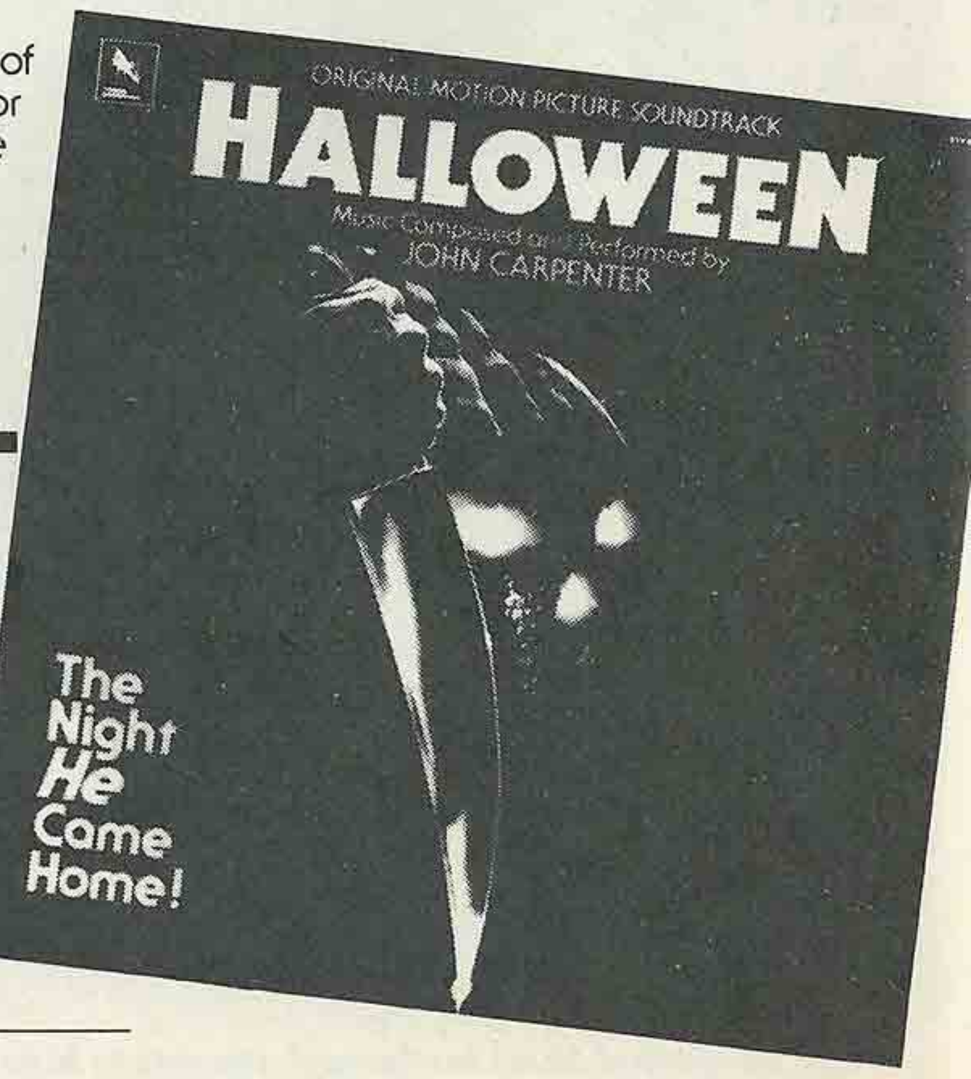
The scoring sessions took two weeks because that's all the budget would allow. *Halloween* was dubbed in late July and I finally saw the picture with an audience in the fall. My plan to "save it with the music" seemed to work. About six months later I ran into the same young executive who had been with 20th Century-Fox (she was now with MGM). Now she too loved the movie and all I had done was add music. But she really was quite justified in her initial reaction.

There is a point in making a movie when you experience the final result. For me, it's always when I see an interlock screening of the picture *with the music*. All of a sudden a new voice is added to the raw, naked-without-effects-or-music footage. The movie takes on its final style, and it is on this that the emotional total should be judged. Someone once told me that music, or the lack of it, can make you see better. I believe it.

AT LAST ON RECORD!

Varese Sarabande's Scott W. Holton—the man who produced the soundtrack LP of George Romero's Night of the Living Dead—has once again performed a major service to the horror-loving public, by overseeing the preparation and release of the definitive version of the horror fan's most sought-after score!

Unlike the Japanese import, Varese Sarabande's Halloween was taken from the original tracks, with stereo re-mix supervised by Alan Howarth, Carpenter's collaborator on the scores for Halloween II and Escape From New York. And it includes themes omitted from the Japanese release—at half the price you'd pay for the import.



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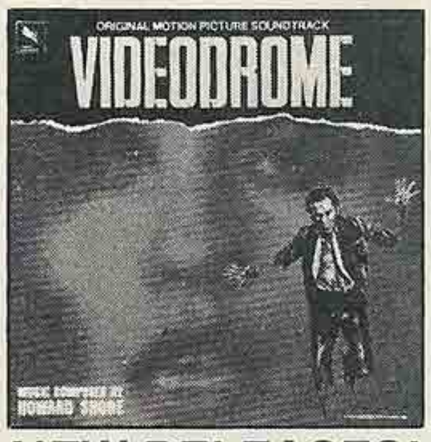

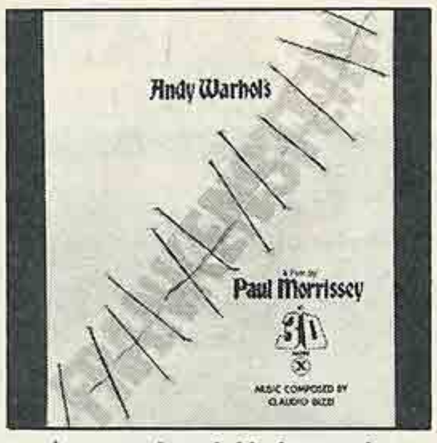

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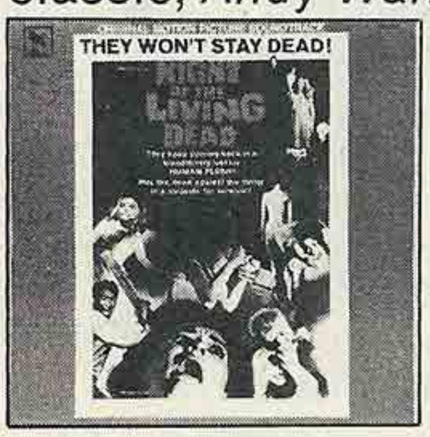

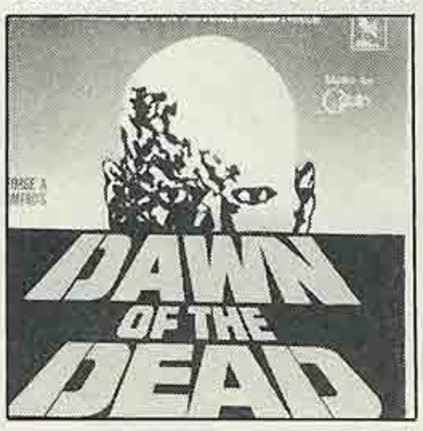

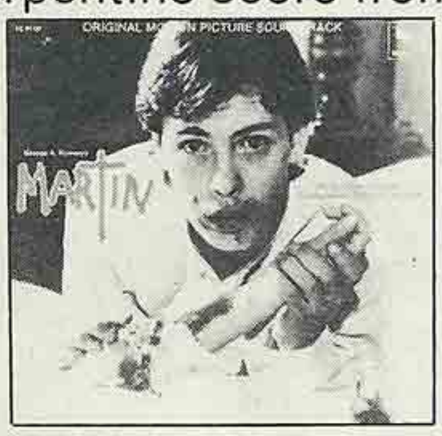

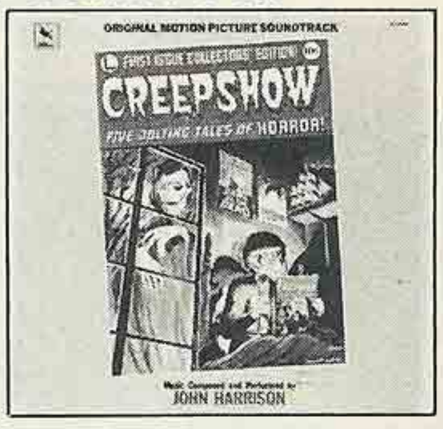

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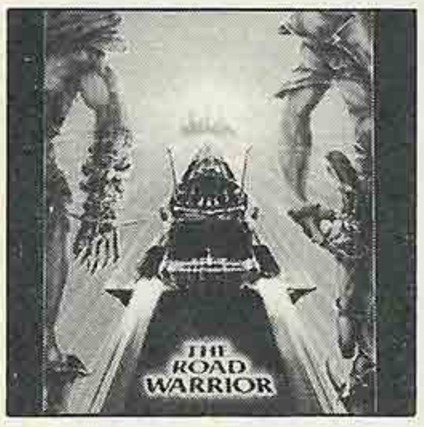

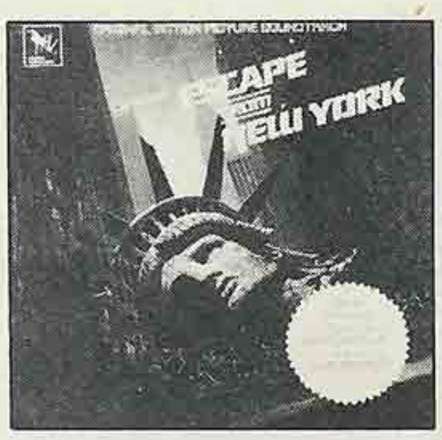

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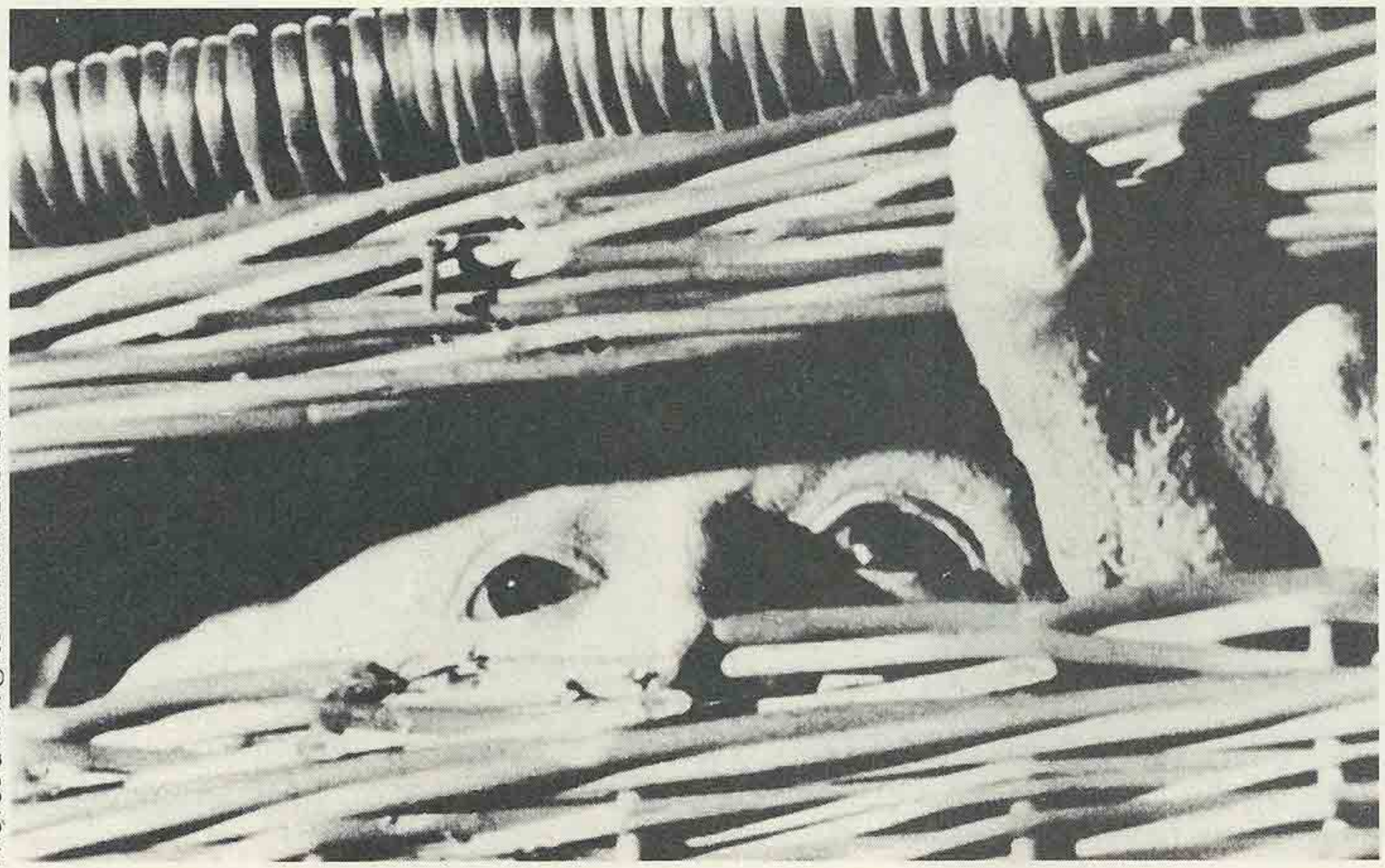

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BASKET CASE

Writer-director Frank Henenlotter and producer Edgar Ievins tell us just how easy it is to make an independent horror film...

By BOB MARTIN

It was thanks to Michael Weldon, editor and publisher of *Psychotronic* (New York's recently-deceased guide to obscure movies on television), that we managed to sneak into an early screening of *Basket Case*, resulting in our small but enthusiastic news item about the film in FANGORIA #14. That item came as quite a surprise to two of our regular readers—Frank Henenlotter and Edgar Ievins, the New York-based writer-director and producer of that film.

"When I saw the words *Basket Case* in FANGORIA, my first reaction was "Oh no . . . someone's grabbed our title. . . !" Henenlotter told us when we visited him in his Greenwich Village apartment. The decor of Henenlotter's smallish flat amply demonstrates his advanced case of movie mania; on the walls, framed posters for *Bride of the Monster, Bloodthirsty Butcher* and the like are flanked by the one-sheets for more dignified fare—like *Night of the Living Dead* and *Psycho*. The lower shelf of a glass-topped coffee table holds tall, incredibly neat stacks of glossy stills and lobby cards. In one corner of the room, sitting on a high coffee table as though he were holding court, was the star of *Basket Case*, the very twisted Belial.

Ievins and Henenlotter proved to be such a friendly pair that the interview was kind of hard to get started; what we really wanted to do was chat about movies, drink some beer and watch the Yankees whomp Oakland. But with a bit of effort, we got to talking about Henenlotter's introduction to the world of cinema.

"The first movie I remember seeing was *Valley of the Zombies*, with Ian Keith. And it scared me; this was about 1958, I must have been about seven. The second, I think, would be *The Wolf Man*, and I cried like hell at the end when they killed him. Those were the ones I remember seeing on TV; I also remember going to see *The Tingler* when I was nine, in a theater where the seats were wired up. I sat on an aisle seat, and was totally convinced by the film—to me, it wasn't a lobster, it was the Tingler, period; I bought the whole thing. I remember I saw it at night, by myself with an all-adult audience—maybe it was teenagers, but to me at nine it seemed like all adults—and I was sitting next to a couple, hoping it looked like I was with my parents so I wouldn't get thrown out. And I remember when the screen went dark, seeing these adults jumping out of their seats and screaming—I remember thinking that if the man in back of me accidentally kicked the back of my seat, my little nine-year-old heart was going to burst . . . I'd be dead and that's that.

"And I remember leaving that theater with sweat pouring down, after having had a miserable time, and thinking to myself, 'God, that was *great*!' "

At the age of 10, Henenlotter experienced terror film satori three more times, when he saw *13 Ghosts, Psycho* ("with my parents at a drive-in—they

put me in the back and told me to go to sleep," he recalls) and his all-time favorite, *Circus of Horrors*. Not long after, his addiction to terror became a desire to produce the same feelings in others. He started making 8mm epics when he was about 14, and, despite the fact that he kept breaking and/or losing cameras, he was soon turning out his own style of mutant film entertainment.

Before starting *Basket Case*—his first film made with a theatrical release in mind—Henenlotter's masterwork was *Slash of the Knife*, his first film shot in 16mm, which at one time almost played as a short with *Pink Flamingoes* at a New York midnight show. According to some, the plan was dropped because *Slash* was too offensive ("Can you imagine a film too offensive to play with *Pink Flamingoes?*" Henenlotter asks). The wholesome image of O'Quinn Studios prevents us from describing the film in any great detail, but Henenlotter describes it as "my period piece—it's a black-and-white sexual hygiene film," and it depicts some of the more horrible results of a promiscuous sex life with tongue firmly in whatever.

Edgar levins first met the young director during production of *Slash*; Henenlotter was building a rotted head at the time. levins has had his own love affair with film, experimenting with stop-motion, and at one point working on an abortive project called *Stalking the Wild Asparagus*, not based on the book of the same name. After completing his Masters and Ed.S. program in counselling and personnel, he directed a community counselling program in upstate New York. "That was really a fun job," levins says, "but the only thing I could think of that wold be *more* fun was filmmaking."

There was no immediate "let's make a film together" explosion when he two first met, but a friendship quickly developed. levins was anxious to enter the film world, and Henenlotter was already aware of his need for a good administrator if he was to expand into feature film production. And levins quickly developed a strong fondness for Henenlotter's work.

Their first project together was planned as *Ooze*, which began as the story of a plague of unknown origin, and mutated into a tale concerning a diet pill with some revoltingly unpleasant side effects. By the time financing was arranged, however, plans were announced by major studios for a number of similarly-structured films, and the financers weren't prepared to go up against the big guys.

"We tried to get the money for *Ooze* and couldn't, so I just wrote a film that could be made for far less money," says Henenlotter. "Right out in front, I wrote a film that was designed to be made for a low, *low* budget."

The first thing Henenlotter had on paper was the title *Basket Case*; he wove around that title the story of a young man named Duane (Kevin VanHentenryck) who arrives in New York City carrying a wicker basket in the film's opening scene. When Duane checks into a fleabag hotel in the heart of midtown occupied by the sort of social rejects one might expect to find in such an establishment, he proves to be the source of considerable curiosity. Why is a handsome young man living in a dump? Who is eating all the fast food he brings up to his room? And *what* is in that basket?

In a flashback the audience is soon given the answers; Duane was born with a Siamese twin brother, named Belial. Though Belial looks like little more than a twisted lump of flesh growing from Duane's side, they loved each other dearly, and their aunt loved them both. But Duane's father hated Belial, and didn't even think of him as human. He hired doctors from New York to separate the boys from each other, and Belial was put in a twist-tie trash bag and left for the morning garbage collection.

Duane (Kevin VanHentenryck) arrives at the seedy dump that will be his New York home, carrying a basket of unspecified content. What's in it? Laundry? Chicken and fries? Easter eggs? Guess again, gore-breath!

Starting from the top: They learned the secret of the basket—greedy hotel resident O'Donovan (Joe Clarke) and Dr. Needleman (Lloyd Pace); Terri Susan Smith plays a girl who nearly seduces Duane into a life of normalcy; Belial gets acquainted with Dr. Kutter (Diana Browne); Beverly Bonner plays a gold-hearted streetwalker who gains Kevin's trust; Kevin and Belial in a brotherly embrace.

But Belial and Duane are psychically linked, and Duane heeds his brother's telepathic call for help. That night, the twins put into action Belial's plan of vengeance against those who would deny his right to life, beginning with their father.

There's a lot more to the story, but some readers will want to discover the really twisted stuff themselves—and the rest are probably already offended, and shouldn't be reading FANGORIA anyway. Suffice to say that the rest concerns love, hate, retribution, and a desperate search for understanding in a too-cruel world.

"Financing is always the hardest part of starting any film," Ievins told us, "and we were particularly lucky in having Danny O'Neill as associate producer. Danny worked as a state auditor, and his help on the presentation was invaluable.

"We couldn't raise money, we found, without losing control over certain aspects. We did get offers, but they were like, 'We get the film, your next three films, and your right leg.' We weren't interested in that kind of deal."

"We were also told at one point to become plumbers," added Henenlotter. "On the other hand, we ran into people like Lee Hessel, who was in-

volved with *The Crazies;* he was wonderful, and answered all kinds of questions that Edgar had. My favorite was Nick Demetroules, who released *Invasion of the Blood Farmers*—he was a great deal of help to us.

"And then it came down to raising money between the two of us. The remarkable thing about *Basket Case* is that it started out with its producer and director going absolutely broke. Every penny was put into start-up."

Outside money did become available during the shooting of the film. "People could walk onto the set, and see that we were making a movie, or we could show them some film spliced together so they could see that what was in the script actually worked."

Before shooting could actually start, however, the pair needed a star for their film. For the task of building Belial, they were lucky enough to obtain the services of two of Dick Smith's newest protegés, Kevin Haney and John Caglione, prior to major-studio assignments as makeup assistants on *Altered States* and *Wolfen* for Haney, *Scanners* and *Friday the 13th Part Two* for Caglione. During the brief time they had to contribute to the film, Haney built the cable-operated version of Belial, and the various mechanisms that were installed for individual scenes; Caglione did the more elaborate makeups for the victims of Belial's wrath, and built the model of Belial as a teenager. Haney and Caglione worked together on the stop-motion model of Belial that sits in Henenlotter's living room.

Speaking of stop-motion, fans of that particular art must be warned that, in keeping with the film's general outrageousness, these scenes are deliberately and comically crude—a laughable nod to the monster filmmaker's obligation to show his creature moving about under its own power. "Crude?" asks Henenlotter. "Rather than putting in a credit for special effects, we were thinking of crediting *ordinary* effects.

"I did the stop-motion scenes myself, and at first I cared very much about moving it very slowly and precisely—for about the first five clips that you see. Then I started kicking it with my foot. The reason it threw the TV set at the camera was that I'd knocked the TV out of place, and I thought, 'Oh, God—I've hit the TV . . . I guess he has to throw it.' All the animation scenes were ad-libbed, and every take we shot is included in the film. Ray Harryhausen can certainly sleep tonight. Luckily, the plot didn't hinge on the credibility of those scenes, so we were able to use them for comedy effect."

New York location shooting offered its own special joys for the pair. While combing Manhattan for the proper hotel for the film, they also examined the contents of the city's "dumpsters"—huge steel bins used to store the city's refuse—for furniture and artifacts for the decor of *Basket Case*'s many sets. "We figured we'd find some charmingly run-down hotel to serve as a location—but there isn't one in all of New York," says the director. They finally settled upon a midtown 8th Avenue hotel, in the center of Manhattan's marginally legal and illegal sex-for-sale district, the sort that has frequent mattress fires caused by the cigarettes of unconscious junkies.

"That hotel was so awful that when we went up looking for rooms to use as rooms for the characters, they all looked like bad sets! It looked like plywood walls—no one would believe these were actual hotel rooms. It was basically a welfare and hooker hotel; Kevin VanHentenryck had lived across the street from the hotel for a while, and had seen all kinds of strange things going on in front of it. When we told him we were going to shoot there, he went into shock. 'You're crazy, you're crazy,' he told us." And he was right."

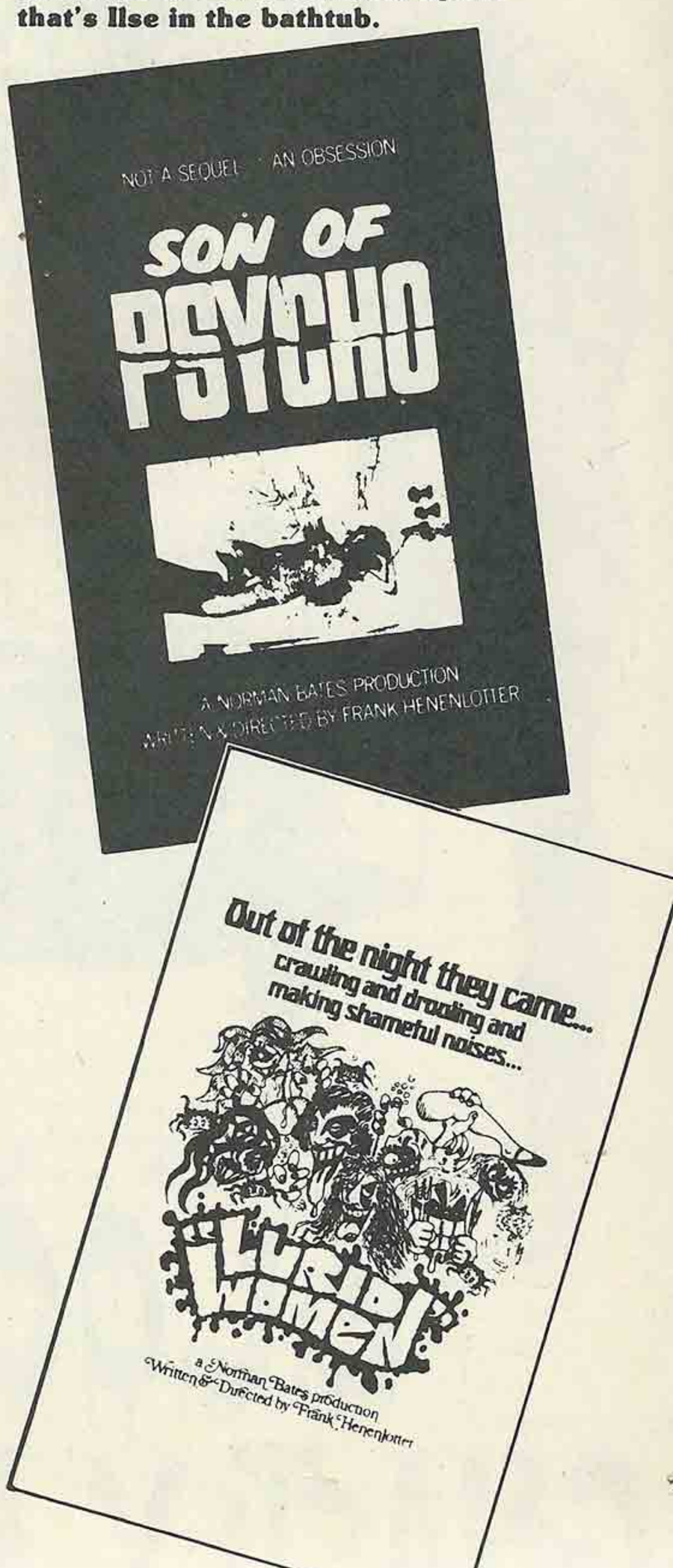
"You'd think that at six or seven in the morning on a Sunday there wouldn't be much traffic," Ievins adds, "but we'd get mobbed by all sorts of bums and derelicts; guys stumbling out of doorays in search of the day's first bottle. People would come up to us and offer to guard our electric cables for 10 dollars. Then, when they realized that if they made enough noise we might pay them to shut up, we couldn't shoot sound anymore. There was one big guy who kept insisting that he just got out of prison,. and that he was the mayor of Newark. We had to have three or four guys over six foot three around to guard the sets!"

Though money was easier to come by once the film had started that was not the end of financial problems. There were times that rushes were delivered to the lab with no idea of how they would be paid for when they were picked up. "On one occasion, we had about 30 or 40 extras on a set," Henenlotter recalls. "We had a lot of shots, all those continuity bridges, that we had to do in order to finish a crowd scene, and Edgar reminded me that we only had about 1200 feet of film—ridiculous! That meant one take on everything—if we were lucky. It also meant stalling everything while I went into the next room to do some quick rewriting, and we had to get everybody out of there by one o'clock, because we couldn't afford to give them lunch. But that's what we did, and it looks fine. But we went broke about fige or six times."

Basket Case took six months in total to shoot, with Henenlotter and crew working straight weeks when their day jobs allowed it, and weekends when they didn't. After the shooting was complete, and a viewable rough cut was made, further financing became possible—money that was put almost entirely into making the film's soundtrack. Due to noisy locations and limited financing, most of *Basket Case*'s sets were miked only for dialogue. In editing the sound, Henenlotter cut on the last syllable of each line; the director and levins acted as their own sound effects men. "I hate to admit this . . . but any time you heard a woman walking, that was me in high heels," the director confides.

With the finished film under their arms, some might think the job was over for the producer-director team. But, still ahead of them—and continuing during this writing—was the effort to place the film with the right distributor, and to get a proper rating without sacrificing the movie. A ratings decision on the film will be made just days after this article goes to press; a *Basket Case* update will be appearing in these pages in our next issue.

Two early 8mm Henenlotter epics; that's Ilse in the bathtub.



Sam Sherman and The Bloody Brain Monsters of GHASTLY HORROR

That master of great movie titles speaks!

By Michael Weldon

Chances are you never heard of Sam Sherman, but if you frequent drive-ins or watch horror movies on television just because they're there, you're probably familiar with his unique product. Most of the movies made or released by Sherman's Independent International company place high on "worst of" lists and are usually mentioned only as objects of ridicule. They do have their fans, however, and have always been profitable. What is the true nature of the mastermind behind *Satan's Sadists, Blood of Ghastly Horror, Brain of Blood, Five Bloody Graves*, and the short-lived but memorable Warren magazine *Screen Thrills*?

The answer to this question and many more, were found in the course of my visit to his compact production complex, located in the sleepy little town of East Brunswick, New Jersey. In Sherman's office, the Frankenstein mask from *Frankenstein vs. Dracula* is displayed proudly on a table, surrounded by posters for various Independent International triumphs. Sherman himself turned out to be a friendly, talkative guy in his mid-forties, fully prepared to tell us the fully-detailed story of his rise to the top.

"I was born in New York City," Sherman began, "and was a longtime fan of horror movies. At Saturday matinees, I remember watching the old serials, and I remember seeing *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* when it first came out. Eventually, I became a big fan of Lugosi and all the Universal horror films.

"When I was at Stuyvesant High School, I wanted to be in the film business. I wanted to make movies, and there were only three schools that had a film course at that time—U.C.L.A., U.S.C. and C.C.N.Y. So I went to City College of New York, because

it was here; among my classmates there were Larry Cohen, who made *Q* and *It's Alive*, and Alan Hine, who won the Academy Award as film editor on *All That Jazz*. At college, I was considered 'the horror man,' and everybody else was considered normal. Somehow, everything I did seemed to revolve around horror movies. Most of the people attending wanted to make documentaries, and serious social comment. I wanted to make B pictures, so I was sort of put down for that.

"For instance, I was involved with the student cultural association, running film shows, and when they ran out of money, I scrounged around to see what we could get to run for nothing. I got ahold of a feature version of the Flash Gordon serial, and *Mask of Fu Manchu*, with Karloff. So the school newspaper came out against me, saying Sherman is turning this thing into a horror club—tasteless and unredeeming! In those years, going back to the mid-fifties, there was no such thing as camp, nor any idea that old horror movies might have value.

"Just because I was annoyed at being put down, I decided to make a horror movie for that year's student project—*The Weird Stranger*, about a vampire—in one day of shooting, with a couple days of editing. You were supposed to put the school seal on the beginning; instead I put my own logo on it, like a B picture company. The professor was sort of annoyed at that, but he gave me an A for it, because it was so technically advanced. It was the only film that had a complete synchronized score, synched sound effects and looped dialogue lip-synch. All the others were crude in the extreme.

"In class, they never wanted to talk about my film again, but I went back there when

Clowning around on the set of *Dracula vs. Frankenstein*. Left to right: John Bloom as the monster, producer Sam Sherman, Zandor Vorkov as Dracula, and director Al Adamson.

my sister was attending, 10 years later, and they were showing a retrospective of student films. They then announced they were going to run the favorite film of the institute in its entire history, and they showed *The Weird Stranger*! In 10 years, horror had gone from being extremely unimportant to being 'campy,' and worthy of study."

After college, Sherman's first experiences in film work were in various technical capacities—music and sound editing and the like. Upon hearing that a magazine called *Famous Monsters of Filmland* had been founded, he decided to get in touch. "I wrote to *FM*," Sherman recalls. "It was a blind letter, just like any fan's—I didn't know anybody, and in very quick order, I went from nothing to supplying stills, doing research and ghostwriting articles. When Jim Warren started *Favorite Westerns of Filmland* (later *Wildest Westerns*), I worked on that, too, for the first few issues. I decided to change it from a humorous magazine to a more historical one, and was promoted to editor. I brought in a friend named Bob Price, who worked with me on it, and one night we were at my house writing an issue. The thought occurred to us that there are so many great things not covered in any movie magazine—Dick Tracy, Bogart, old serials, Superman . . . within two hours we had planned the first issue of *Screen Thrills*.

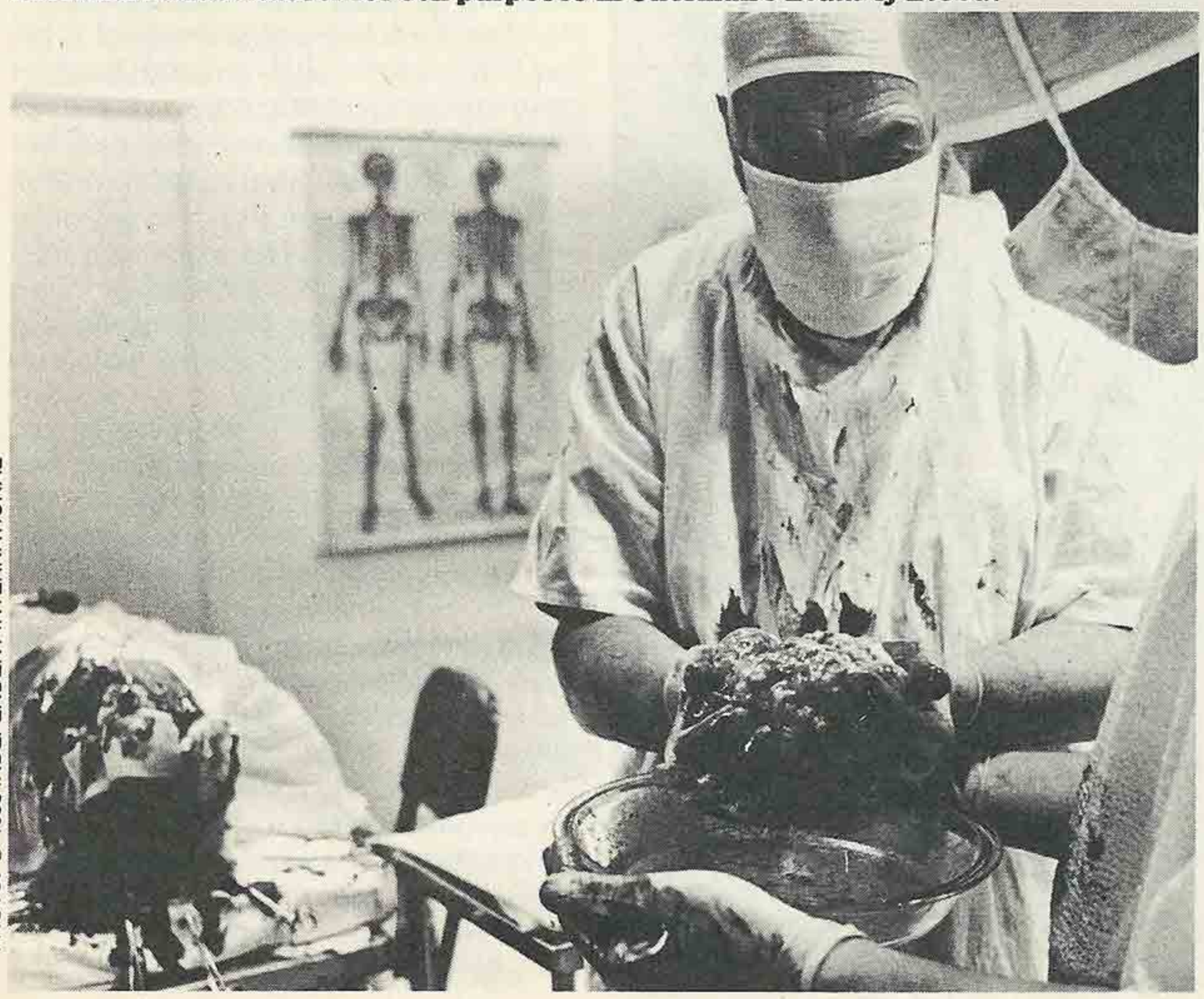
"We went to Jim Warren, who jumped on the idea and changed our title to *Screen Thrills Illustrated*; he worshiped Hugh Hefner, who had *Show Business Illustrated* out at that time. Then he proceeded to do that awful first cover, which we really hated—that half a face. After that, he gave us a freer reign in what we were doing.

"Contrary to what many might think, that entire magazine was written by Bob and myself, even though our credits were as editorial director and executive editor. We were the writers, editors, layout people—we did the whole magazine."

Sherman's long-term goal remained in the movie business, and in 1962 he left the glories of Warren Publishing behind, to make his fortune in Hollywood. One of his most valued contacts was a friend he'd made during his years at Warren, *FM* editor and founder Forrest J. Ackerman.

"I was there for several months, and Forry took me around to a lot of studios and places. I was meeting people, and interviewing people, with the intention of getting into the industry, rather than continuing to do articles. I met a man that I idolize—I like a lot of people that very few people follow—whose name in the movies was Denver Dixon. His real name is Victor Adamson and he had produced, directed and distributed many silent and early talkie films, and he was still active. He and I developed a fast friendship, and I then returned to New York and represented him for foreign sales; before long we were

A fistful of cerebellum is examined as dedicated doctors transplant the brain of President Abdel Nasser for evil purposes in Sherman's *Brain of Blood*.



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The Very Best of Sherman/Adamson

Satan's Sadists: Though I.I.'s first release was not a horror film, reviewers had plenty of horrible things to say about this R-rated biker flick, released in 1969. Russ Tamblyn (star of *War of the Gargantuas* and *West Side Story*) starred as a psychotic biker whose busty blonde girlfriend is played by Regina Carrol, real-life wife of director Adamson. Faded stars Kent Taylor (*The Crawling Hand*) and Scott Brady (*Nightmare in Wax*) represent the establishment. Gore journal reaction to its 1983 reissue on 42nd Street made it clear that this film was ahead of its time. *Gore Gazette*: "gratuitous violence and overt sadism make it still pack a wallop today." *Sleazoid Express*: "disturbing, horrifying, fascinating."

Hell's Bloody Devils: An incoherent mess filmed in 1967 and originally billed with *Satan's Sadists,* this one stars Broderick Crawford with Scott Brady (FBI agent), Kent Taylor (Nazi), Keith Andes (Mafioso), John Carradine (bit part) and Robert Dix (as Cunk, leader of the Bloody Devils). Real bikers (the Hessians) and the real Colonel Sanders also appear. On TV as *The Fakers*, 20 minutes of biker subplot and violence are missing.

Five Bloody Graves: A violent occult Western, with Dix as a messenger of death. Carradine, Brady, Jim Davis (of *Dallas*) and Paula Raymond also appeared in the 1969 film. When first shown on a double bill with *Horror of the Blood Monsters*, a "free frozen corpse" was offered to each paying customer. The attendees each received a coupon redeemable for one frozen chicken.

Horror of the Blood Monsters: Sam Sherman has forgotten the original name of the black-and-white Fillipiono-made horror film that provided the core of this 1969 release. After purchasing the film, Sherman had Adamson shoot new footage with John Carradine, Robert Dix and another I.I. regular, Vicky Volante, in a tacky spaceship. The plot revolved around space vampirism, which eventually spreads to earth (more new footage shows earthlings with very long teeth). Brother Theodore narrated, and the old footage was tinted,thus allowing I.I. to advertise the movie as one filmed "In Spectrum X!" A true oddity of patchwork filmmaking in the tradition of the Corman/Harrington *Queen of Blood,* this one can be caught on TV as *Vampire Men of the Lost Planet.*

Brain of Blood: The eight-day shooting schedule shows in this attempt by Adamson to emulate the style and atmosphere of Eddie Romero's "Blood Island" epics. Kent Taylor is the mad doctor, using the brain of Egypt's President Nasser, then recently deceased, to bring a monster to life, with the help of Monogram dwarf star Angelo Rossitto.

Blood of Dracula's Castle: If Jayne Mansfield had lived, this film might have provided the opportunity to prove that she could really act. Instead, I.I. stock player Paula Raymond has the Mansfield role as the Countess who is evicted, along with Count Alex D'Arcey, from their California castle by a young couple who have inherited it. Butler Carradine and mute hunchback Mango pass the time draining blood from young girls chained up in the basement. Trained dolphins and Robert Dix as a werewolf add to the excitement.

Dracula Vs. Frankenstein: 70-year-old J. Carroll Naish (in his last role) is the wheelchair-ridden Dr. Frankenstein. Sixty-four-year-old Lon Chaney, Jr. (in *his* last role) is Groton, a mute "zombie" who decapitates young women attending a carnival to aid in the docs's experiments. (Chaney had starred in an earlier, non-I.I. Adamson feature, *The Female Bunch*, with Regina Carrol leading a band of female bikers, filmed on the Charles Manson ranch.) Zandor Varkov, as Dracula, forces the doctor to revive the monster, played by big John Bloom (also the monster in *Brain of Blood*). Angelo Rossitto is a sinister carnival barker, and the multi-star cast is rounded out by Anthony Eisley (*The Wasp Women, The Navy vs. the Night Monsters*), Regina Carrol (who unintentionally takes LSD, sings, and dances, though not all at once), and good old Russ Tamblyn in more biker footage that's cut from all the TV prints. The ultimate Sherman/Adamson cast is completed by the appearance of Forry Ackerman as a victim of the monster.

Blood of Ghastly Horror: This item's checkered history begins with an Adamson-directed 1965 film called *Psycho-a-Go-Go!* Hemisphere shot some John Carradine mad-lab scenes prior to its 1966 release as *Fiend with the Electronic Brain.* I.I. acquired the film, and added more scenes, with Tommy Kirk (*It's Alive, Pajama Party*) as a cop who receives a head in the mail.

distributing pictures in the South as they did in the silent days, territory by territory: Westerns, reissues, other strange pictures. He eventually wanted to become less active, and his son Al wanted to direct."

Before Sherman and Al Adamson got their own company going, Sherman became associated with Hemisphere Pictures through his friendship with Hemisphere president Irwin Pizer. Pizer's partner, Kane Lynn, was a highly decorated naval officer and pilot in the Pacific theater during World War II. As a result of Lynn's familiarity with the Phillipines, Hemisphere was able to pioneer the use of the island republic as a film location—thereby paving the way for umpteen New World cheapies and Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*. Prior to Sherman's association, Hemisphere had made mostly war pictures, one notable exception being 1959's *Terror is a Man*, an effective leopard-man movie starring Francis Lederer. Fairly bloody for its time (it was set on "Blood Island"), the Dr. Moreau-inspired thriller was promoted with a warning buzzer gimmick to alert the audience of shocking scenes.

"I kept telling them to go into horror, go into horror and stop making war pictures, and induced them to do it," recalls Sherman. "They took *Terror* and retitled it *Blood Creature,* billed it with *The Walls of Hell* (a Phillipines-made war movie) and got their first taste of horror; the bill did very well. As a result of that, they purchased another picture from the Phillipines called *Blood Drinkers,* by the same director as *Terror*, Gerry DeLeon, a very clever, creative director. That was teamed with a black and white film from Texas called *The Black Cat.*"

So, 10 years after *Terror is a Man* was made, it spawned what is now known as "the Blood Island trilogy." John Ashley, formerly a teen star (*Frankenstein's Daughter, Eye Creatures* and several A.I.P. beach movies), lit up the screen in *Brides of Blood* (1968), *Mad Doctor of Blood Island* (1969) and *Beast of Blood* (1970), gory hits produced by Kane Lynn and directed by Eddie Romero. For over a decade to come, these same films would resurface constantly at drive-ins and on TV under myriad titles (for instance, *Brides of Blood* was reissued by Motion Picture Marketing as *Grave Desires*).

One of Sherman's favorite tasks was creating outrageous ad campaigns and clever promotional gimmicks. For instance, the opening of *Mad Doctor* was a title card that led the audience in the reading of a blood oath. The patrons would then be told to swallow the packet of gelatin-based green "blood" that each had received. Though the blood was formulated to be quite safe, the very thought of consuming the viscous food was sufficient to produce a few casualties at each screening.

Eddie Romero directed yet a fourth John Ashley film, *Beast of the Yellow Night,* which was to have been Hemisphere's fourth in the Blood Island series. However,

the Kansas City backers who had financed the previous three films had a falling out with the producers at Hemisphere, and negotiated a release through the brand-spanking-new company New World Pictures, allowing Roger Corman to enter the burgeoning field of "Blood Island Mania." Sherman's own distribution company was finally off the ground at this time. Larry Woolner, Corman's original New World partner, then bought theatrical rights to the Klaus Kinski import *Creature with the Blue Hand* from Sherman (Sherman says that he had bought the film on the strength of Kinski's acting, though no one had heard of him at the time). So it was that the *Beast* and *Creature* double-bill became the very first New World release.

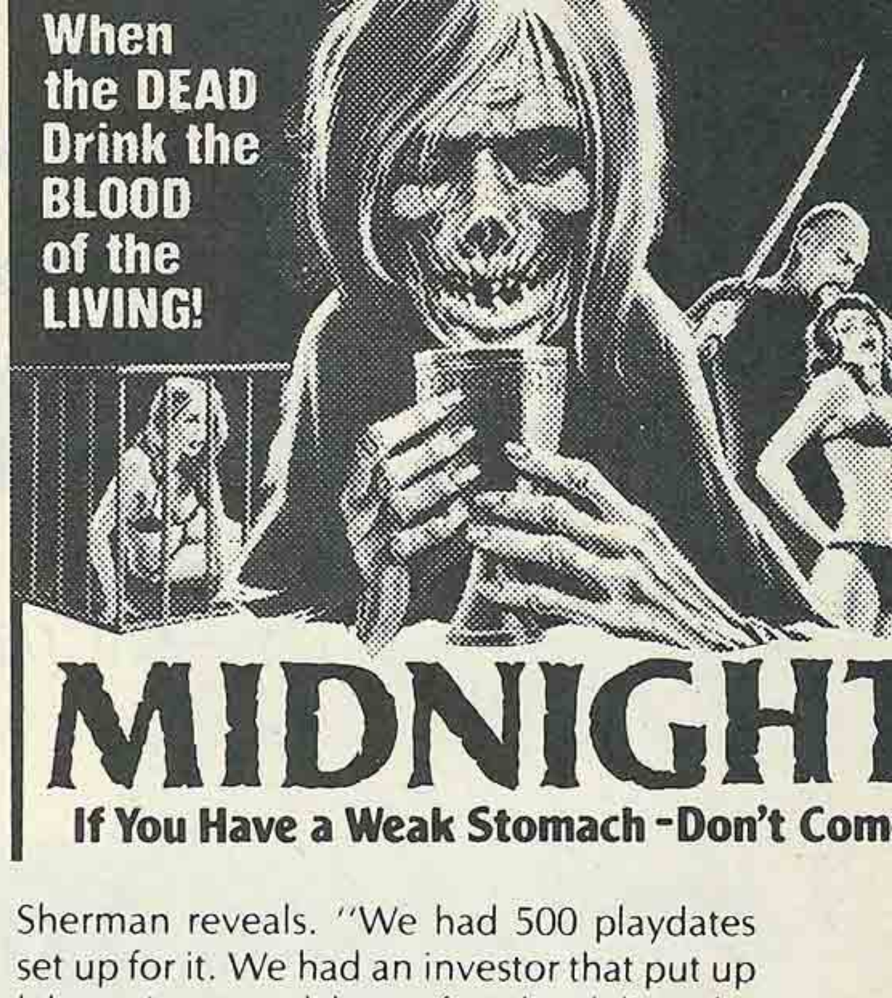
Though Hemisphere was now competing with Sherman's newly formed Independent International, Sherman maintained good relations. "Every spring, they put out a double bill," Sherman recalls, "and on one occasion, they needed a picture to release and didn't have one ready. So Kane Lynn asked, 'Could you guys make a picture for me?' He needed it for release in 90 days. This was shortly after the death of Nasser in Egypt, and I thought, what if his brain was frozen and put in another body, given plastic surgery and returned to power? That became *Brain of Blood*, a picture that we did in eight days."

Brain of Blood was just one of a string of pictures made by Independent International's vice president and resident director Al Adamson. Though the name Adamson is, for many fans, synonymous with rotten movie-making, Sherman feels that the enduring wretchedness of some of these films may have had more to do with Adamson's attitude toward the material than any real lack of talent. "In 1966, when Al was beginning to direct," says Sherman, "he had a desire to develop new stars. He didn't want anybody old, while I, being a film buff, wanted old timers in the movies. Al wanted to do dramatic films, and musicals, that's his kind of picture—I wanted to do horror pictures. So I induced Al to get involved with horror, which he never really wanted to do. People who criticize Al when they see some of the pictures that aren't that great—they don't realize that Al did it under my direction, at my insistence that he do things against his better nature—just because it was something we could market."

The first Adamson-Sherman picture started with a script by Rex Carlton, who also wrote *Nightmare in Wax* (1969), and who wrote *and* produced the wretchedly entertaining 1963 opus *The Brain That Wouldn't Die*. "Carlton had written a script for Jayne Mansfield, a comedy called *Feast of Blood*, and wanted Al to direct. I rewrote the picture, with elements to make it more commercial. That picture became *The Blood of Dracula's Castle*. I suggested John Carradine for the older Dracula role; when others became involved, they switched him to the butler role and got Alex D'Arcey as Dracula. Eventually, through some behind-the-scenes shenanigans, the picture was foreclosed by one of the backers and the lab—everybody lost everything. I never got paid, Al never got paid, nobody got paid. Crown got it through the backers and distributed it."

Sherman and Adamson launched Independent International Pictures in 1968, their first big release being the notorious biker film *Satan's Sadists* starring Russ Tamblyn. The second release, complete with cameo appearance by Forrest J. Ackerman, was *Dracula vs. Frankenstein*. "The original cast was to be Paul Lukas as the doctor and Broderick Crawford as the police detective. Lukas was Hungarian and sounded like Lugosi, so I felt he would be good. Three weeks later, he read the script and felt it was too bloody, so he backed out. Crawford was tied up, and backed out, also. We were offered a package deal from an agent; we got J. Carroll Naish to play the doctor, along with Lon Chaney, Jr. The agent neglected to tell us that Chaney was dying from cancer of the larynx and could barely talk. We had to change his role to that of a mute with voice-overs. I wanted Angelo Rossito, a dwarf actor who had worked at Monogram; he was a friend of Barrymore and Lugosi. He was found selling newspapers in L.A. Russ Tamblyn had a motorcycle part that should never have been in the picture—it had nothing to do with the real plot—but we were trying to get some of the feel of *Satan's Sadists*."

I.I. was later instrumental in bringing to the U.S. several pictures featuring the talents of Spain's leading horror screenwriter, director and star, Paul Naschy. Sherman was able to clear up one long-lived mystery for us: why was Naschy's first film, known as *Mark of the Werewolf* in Spain, shown as *Frankenstein's Bloody Terror* in the U.S., when there was no trace of the Frankenstein theme in the picture? "*Dracula vs. Frankenstein* was originally going to be called *Blood of Frankenstein*,"



Sherman reveals. "We had 500 playdates set up for it. We had an investor that put up lab services—and then refused to deliver the negative unless we buy him out for $65,000, for his $20,000 investment! We went into a year of litigation with him, while our credibility with exhibitors threatened to go to zero because we couldn't deliver *Blood of Frankenstein*. So I screened many films, looking for a substitute; one was called *Hell's Creatures* (the British title of *Mark*), with Naschy as Waldemar the werewolf. I had an instant liking for Naschy; he elicited the sort of pity that Chaney, Jr. had as Larry Talbot.

"I had to figure out a way to substitute it for *Blood of Frankenstein*, so I edited out the beginning, up to the point where they kept talking about the Wolfstein family, which sounded like a combination of wolf and Frankenstein to me, and we created a little animated prologue, claiming some ridiculous, far-out connection with the family of Frankenstein and called the picture *Frankenstein's Bloody Terror*. It's not that we were trying to spend our time ripping off the audience; I had to supply something similar to what had been promised. It came out and made a tremendous amount of money."

In an interesting footnote to the above story, I.I.'s subdistributor in Los Angeles got wind that the film had originally been shot in 70mm 3-D, and insisted on releasing it in that format. After getting the original right-and-left prints from Spain, and reprocessing the prints to 35mm, however, the project was sabotaged by the sub-distributor's cheap-o plastic projection lenses. "We had seen it projected with quality lenses," Sherman says, "which showed the film up beautifully. Then it opened at The Egyptian Theater, a major Hollywood premier [horror host Seymour, Forry Ackerman and Kirk "Superman" Alyn were among the attendees]—and those horrible lenses screwed the whole thing up, and down the drain it went."

Sherman's appreciation of Naschy survived that experience, however, and he went on to release Naschy's *Night of the Howling Beast* and *House of Psychotic Women*, both titles much more appropriate to the subject matter of the films.

Fango Exclusive!

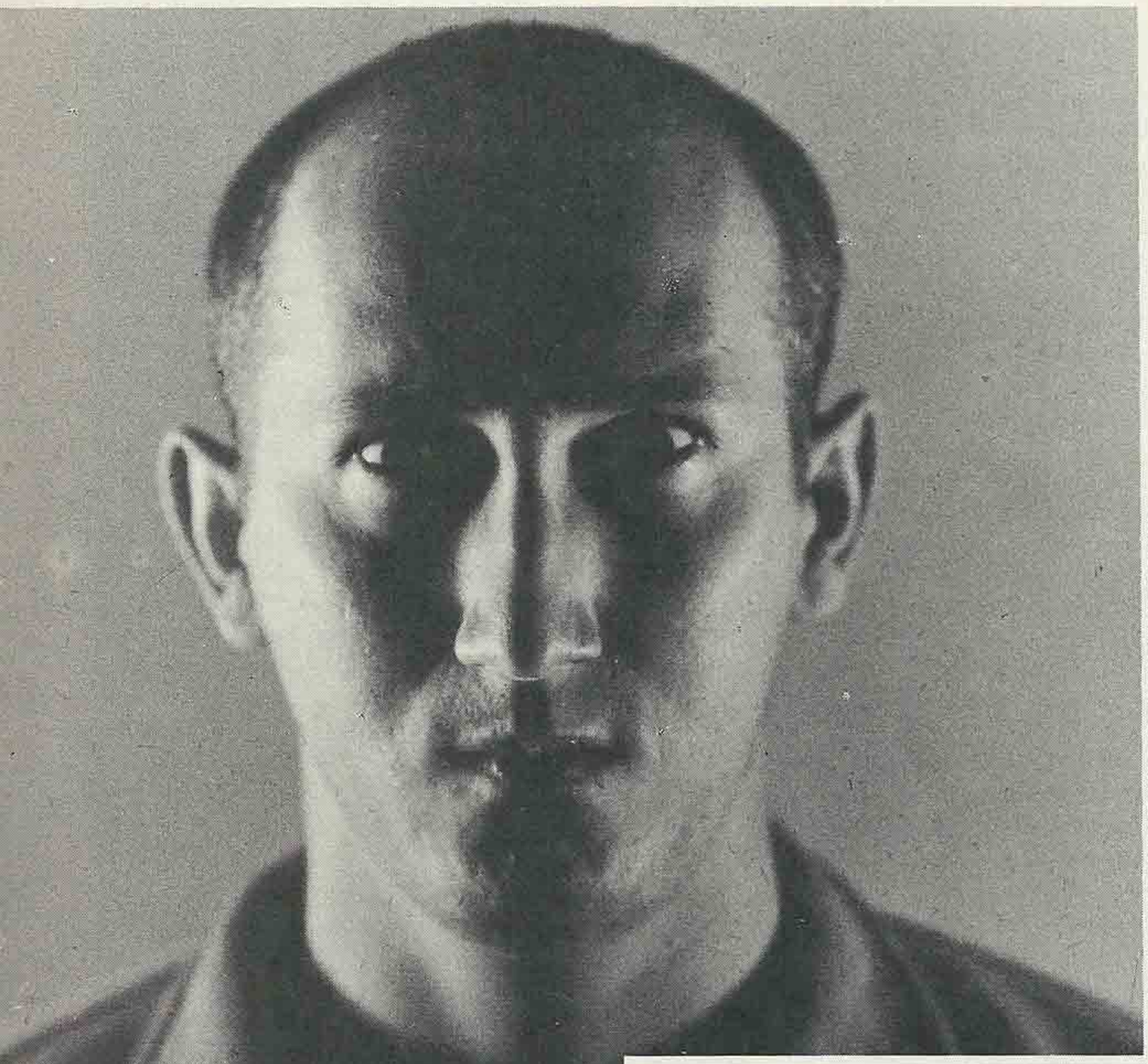
THE STECKLER HORROR GALLERY

The Incredibly Strange *Photo Journal of Ray Dennis Steckler!*

Last issue, Johnny Legend interviewed that cult director's cult director, the one-and-only Ray Dennis Steckler, the man who made *Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living And Became Mixed-Up Zombies* and *The Thrill Killers,* and, under the name of Cash Flagg, starred in same. The response to this article, even before the issue hit the stands, was so great, that we felt obligated to run a follow-up feature to assuage the national thirst for Steckleriana. When we received a fat package of stills and press material from Steckler himself, our course became clear: the time had come for the definitive Ray Dennis Steckler Photo Feature.

As you can see from the fabulous illustrations on these pages, words can only hint at the wonderful, wacko exploitation pzazz that Steckler's visuals drive relentlessly home. So, without further ado, here is the off-the-wall photo history of the Steckler/Cash Flagg experience, from *Incredibly Strange* and *Lemon Grove Kids Meet the Monsters,* to *Rat Pfink and Boo Boo* and, his latest, *Hollywood Strangler Meets the Skid Row Slasher.*

ALL PHOTOS: COURTESY OF RAY DENNIS STECKLER



Left: The face of terror, and then some. Ray Dennis Steckler, in his Cash-Flagg-the-actor guise, as the lead psycho in *The Thrill Killers*. Look—if you dare!

Right: Cash Flagg, at his most definitive, as the hipster who falls under a hypnotic spell and does bad things to girls.

Right: One of the hideous Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Mixed-Up Zombies menaces heroine Carolyn Brandt in the picture of the same name (you weren't expecting us to run that name *another* time, were you?). Below: Rat Pfink and Boo Boo on the job. Bottom: Ron Haydock, under the screen name of Vin Saxon, as swingin' Lonnie Lord AKA Rat Pfink. Confused? Then you'll just have to see the movie.

Right: Steckler's latest extravaganza.

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Dick Smith and *The Hunger*

The Makeup King Reveals the Secrets of his Effects for Tony Scott's Vampire Film.

By David Everitt

The last time I interviewed Dick Smith he was just finishing his makeup effects for *Death Bite* and said that his next project was going to be an unusual vampire story called *The Hunger* that would be his most challenging and diversified effects job since *The Exorcist*. As he talks to me now in his basement workshop, Smith puts the finishing touches on a souvenir from the *Hunger* production that is an illustration of the skillful work that went into the movie. From the mold used to make David Bowie's extreme old-age makeup, Smith has cast a bronzini replica of the ancient features and is now burnishing the bust with steel wool. As the steel wool brings out the bronze sheen in the statue, the superbly detailed, shriveled, 150-year-old features come into striking relief. The head is a typically meticulous bit of Smith makeup in itself, but it is only a fraction of the makeup effects he had to produce for *The Hunger*. Now that the film is completed, the makeup master is free to tell us the story behind the amazing illusions he created for Tony Scott's stylish thriller.

Bowie's rapid aging process accounted for a large chunk of Smith's chores for *The Hunger*. As John Blaylock, Bowie plays a normal man who has been transformed by his vampire lover (Catherine Deneuve) into a blood-seeking accomplice capable of incredible longevity. This ever-youthful love affair lasts 200 years, but it is only a matter of time until this transformation loses its effect. As the backlog of years suddenly catch up to Bowie, the audience is shown this process in stages, with the help of Smith's makeup appliances. In the beginning of the picture Bowie appears to be around 30, then he quickly assumes the appearance of someone at the age 40 and then 50. Up until this point the changes in Bowie were accomplished by Ann Brodie's conventional makeup staff by applying such touches as shadow around the eyes. Once Bowie reaches the age of 55, Smith took over with his specially molded appliances. Throughout his discussion of his *Hunger* effects, Smith often uses the word "we" to include the efforts of Carl Fullerton. He points out that Carl was his "associate and partner, because Carl was equally responsible for the success of our work."

In addition to facial appliances, Smith and Fullerton's work on Bowie's aging required that they cast the actor from head to foot. Smith explains: "Catherine Deneuve had to pick him up off the floor and carry him to the attic when he is at age 150. So we had to create a life-size, lightweight dummy for this sequence. This dummy served a second purpose in that I intended to alter parts of his body as well for the extreme old age. What we did was make a foam-latex shoulder

Dick Smith confers with his aged dummy of David Bowie in front of his personal gallery of makeup portraits.

ALL PHOTOS: COURTESY OF DICK SMITH; © 1983 MGM/UA

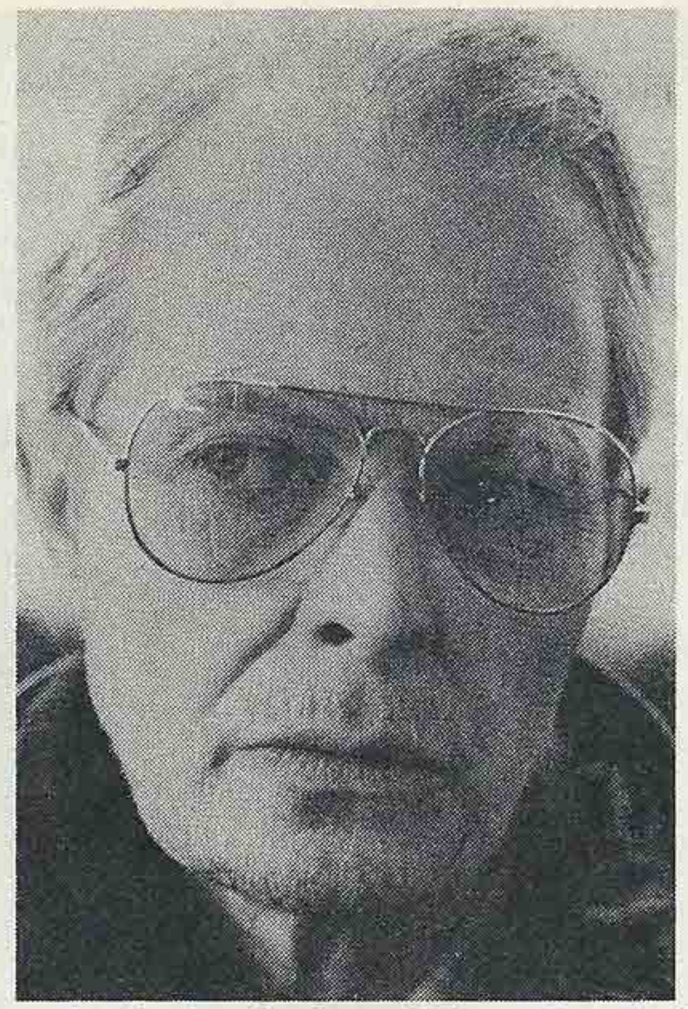
Right: Eerie lighting highlights the emergence of Deneuve's "mummy-lovers," constructed by Smith and Carl Fullerton, during the climax of *The Hunger*.

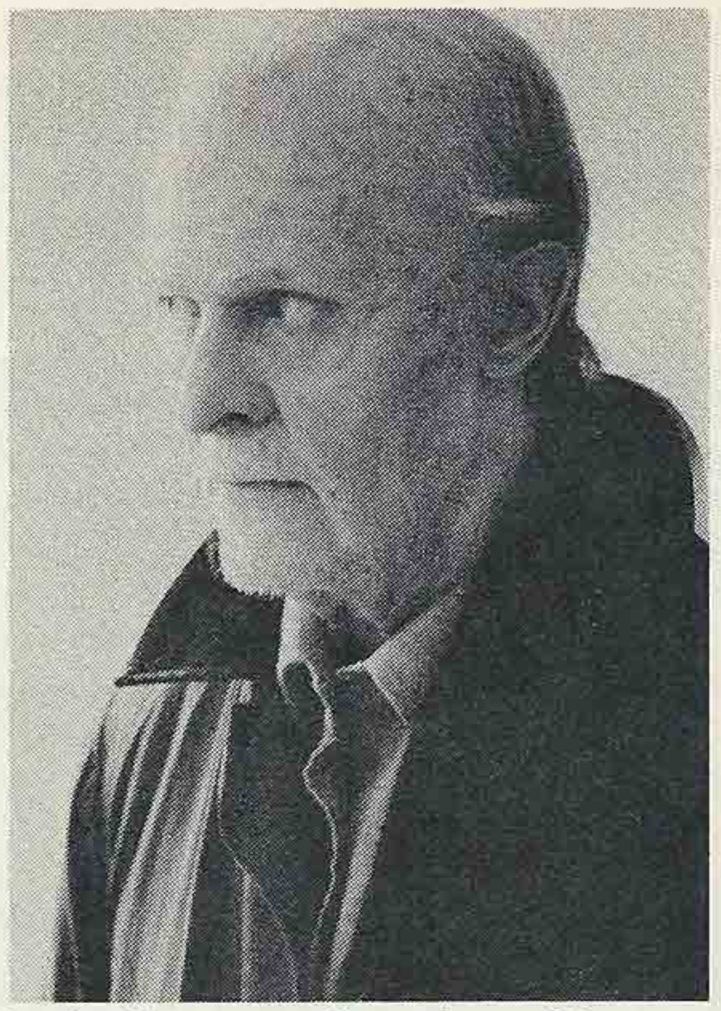
Left: The exposed mechanisms that manipulate Smith's brilliant transformation head substituted for Deneuve.

hump, a small belly, and leg appliances which went from his hips to his knees, and covered his knees with bony knee caps. These served a purpose even though he was always fully clothed. His costume was a very lightweight, summery suit that costume designer Milena Canonero helped in choosing—we discussed it very carefully. This was a fabric that would cling to his body reasonably well, so that when he's sitting, his legs, instead of looking like healthy stocky legs—Bowie's a skier and has strong, muscular legs—his legs would give the appearance through the clothing of being bony and shriveled. It did in fact add a subtle touch. The very large shoulder pad made him look stoop-shouldered. These touches gave him a body profile which worked out well."

Catherine Deneuve, as the lovely vampire Miriam Blaylock, runs into her own physical problems at the end of the picture when she shrivels and transforms into grotesque undead remains. During this final sequence, Miriam's former lovers who, like John Blaylock have aged horribly and are now kept like mummies in the attic, escape from their captivity and crumble into dust. These scenes provided Smith and Fullerton with their most complicated and demanding challenges.

When Smith originally discussed Deneuve's disintegration scene with Tony Scott, the makeup artist proposed an intriguing idea which eventually was not accepted. Smith says that "perhaps it's just as well we didn't do it that way because subsequently there have been a couple of films that use the same approach, as in *The Cat People*. What I'm referring to is the idea of having a sudden break-through in the face. After Catherine Deneuve hits the floor and goes into her Saint Vitus' dance I wanted to see Catherine's





On the left we see David Bowie as he appears in the beginning of Tony Scott's film. As the Hunger strikes, the sudden aging process begins and Smith's remarkable appliances work their magic.

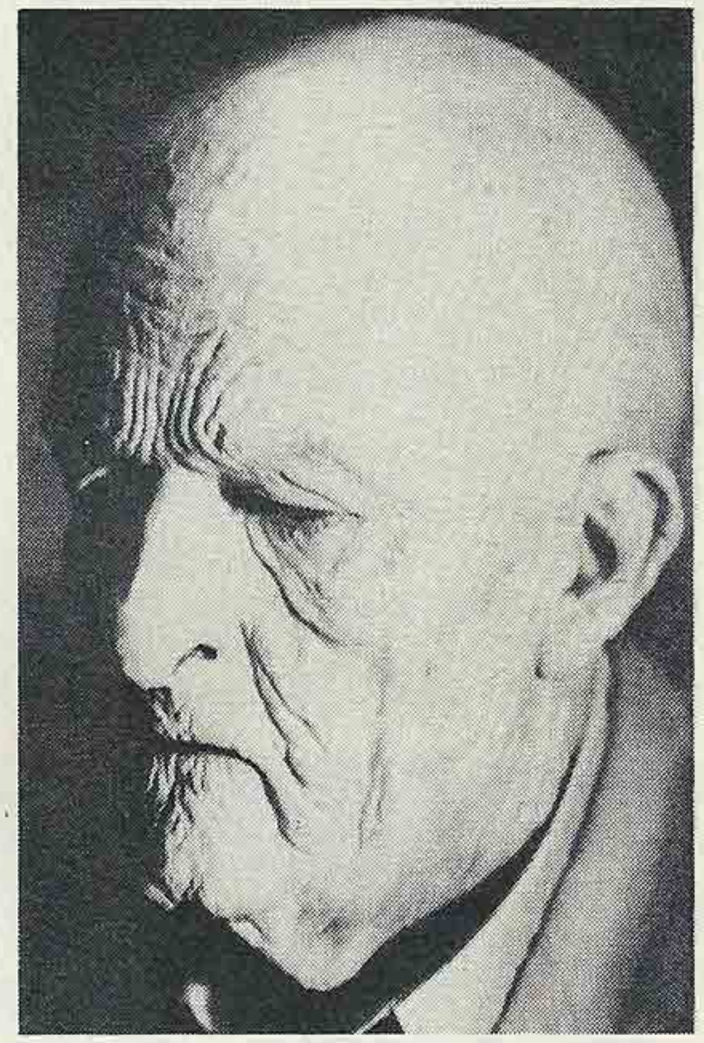
beautiful face suddenly split open and the real demon inside, in a sense, emerge. I wanted something to symbolize the horror." The makeup man gets up and points out the model he made for the emerging inner face. It is a pallid visage with spare, nightmarish features. "I thought the shock of seeing something like this break through would have been marvelous and also appropriate." The demon face would then change into a malevolent shriveled head. Scott didn't care for this approach; instead he wanted Deneuve to end up looking like the crumbling "mummies" from the attic. "What I felt," Smith goes on to say, "was that the mummies, as I call them, were Catherine's former lovers, they were former human beings. They were, in fact, modeled after actual mummies which exist in Mexico. My original concept was that Catherine Deneuve would look different, that she would look far worse and far more frightening." (We are not printing pictures of Smith's models for his proposed scenario because he is saving these creations for possible future use.)

Even though Deneuve's disintegration is not significantly different in concept from the mummy-lovers' fate, the sequence still demanded a formidable amount of labor and imagination on Smith's part. In a series of close shots, the audience is shown Deneuve's black-stockinged legs shriveling, her hand turned old and wrinkled (for which an actual old woman's hand was used; old-age stipple was added to accentuate the wrinkled look), and then her head is seen as the facial features start to decay and transform. When Smith constructed a head-and-shoulders dummy for the facial effects work, he decided that, in addition to the usual movement of the eyes, jaws and tongue, he was going to develop a new technique to create the most startling illusions called for in this sequence. "I didn't want to use bladders," he says. "That effect has been used so much now that I felt I wanted something new that would give it a different look. As you know, mechanical heads are all based on the principle of having a rigid skull-like structure containing the effects mechanism, with a hinged jaw and so forth, covered by a flexible skin. The skin is affected by the mechanical movements inside. I decided what would be an interesting variation would be, instead of using a rigid material for the skull, to make a flexible material that would support the shape of the head but, in itself, could be deformed inward. We could also use bladders, so you could have it both ways. You could have the skull cave-in in an area and you could also have it expand out with bladders. I thought that by careful manipulation one could get the effect of a head appearing almost as if it were seen in a mylar mirror, where it has a sort of rippling effect, an effect which heretofore could only be done optically—but we literally did it."

The material Smith used for this flexible skull was a urethane rubber originally designed for strong and relatively flexible rubber molds that has roughly the same consistency as a rubber bicycle tire. The urethane was fashioned into varying thicknesses for different areas of the skull. The back of the head which was in contact with the central mechanical control column was thick and relatively rigid to supply support, while the forehead, cheeks and jaw were thinner to allow for greater flexibility. These thinner areas could be pulled inward by cables from inside the skull.

A second head was then made to show a more advanced stage of decay. This second stage also included a mechanism for distortion but it was designed to show the movement subsiding. Smith had planned on a device that would act as a segue from the first to the second head, but Tony Scott showed little interest in shooting this connecting technique, partially because, Smith points out, little time was left for shooting of any kind. If it had been filmed, the sequence would have been yet another example of Smith's cleverness and attention to dramatic detail. "In both heads," the makeup man explains, "I concentrated on the cheekbone area. In the number one head there are not only distortions of the skull and some bladder effects but I had a cheekbone protruding out. I planned that we could go in on a tight shot on that cheekbone as it bulged out and then we could cut or dissolve to the similar area on the number two head which also had a protruding cheekbone. But on the more shriveled number two head the cheekbone action stretched out the wrinkled skin to such an extent that it almost eliminated the wrinkles from that area to make it appear very much like the cheekbone area on the number one head. I felt that by allowing the cheekbone to retract back into position you would see the wrinkles appearing. I thought that was a pretty neat segue, but we never shot it."

Another disappointment for Smith was the way in which the first distorting head was shot. He says, "We did a test here when we



The final stage—David Bowie at 150 years of age. This makeup was retouched and later used for the 200-years incarnation.

completed it and we were absolutely delighted with the results. It was realistic and very believable. It could turn 180 degrees from side to side and it could thrash around and the mouth moved and so forth. And then, when the head distorted, it was quite shocking. However, when we came to film it Tony did not do all the things I would have hoped. He became fascinated by overcranking the camera to slow down the action. The trouble was, on many of the shots we took, the action was slowed down to the point where you weren't aware that the face was changing; it made it far too subtle and we could not speed up the mechanical action more to match the overcranking. Tony and I argued about this and on the second day of shooting, after we had seen the rushes, I was able to get him to do some takes at normal speed." As of this writing, Smith has still not seen the final cut of the film and is still unsure what effects shots will be seen in the movie. He says, "Though there is some footage at normal speed, I have a suspicion that, when he edits, his own taste for wild movement and arty shots will come through. He's very art-conscious. For instance, there's a wonderful profile shot where the lighting halos the head; it's an extremely close shot. It works very well and it looks very realistic, but it doesn't show anything happening except the head turning back and forth very rapidly. It doesn't show any transformation."

The scene of the "mummies" crumbling that accompanies Deneuve's ghastly destruction presented Smith and Fullerton with a new set of problems that required some inventive thinking as far as materials and techniques were concerned. Early on, Smith had considered constructing dummies

Fullerton works on one of the mummies.

Top: For the final crumbling sequence, Fullerton tests one of the fragile mummy arms. Bottom: The inner workings side by side with the Deneuve dummy-head.

to perform the sequence but this became impossible when he learned of the amount of movement Scott had choreographed into the scene. The alternate solution was to cast very skinny people in the mummy parts and make entire rubber suits for them to wear. Smith says, "You can't make someone literally look like skin-and-bones, but we were going to do the best we could and hope that with proper lighting we could pull it off."

Smith gives credit to Fullerton for handling most of the especially difficult business of making the mummies crumble into dust. "Originally," Smith says, "we had hoped to have almost entire figures, copies of the rubber suits of course, that would somehow crumble before your eyes. But we found we were faced with a contradiction in terms, in a way. If you have a substance that's so fragile that it crumbles terribly easily, it doesn't have the strength to support any large shape. And such things as using explosives or any really violent means of destroying these figures were out of the question; it would produce effects that Tony didn't want. After a couple of months of experimentation with all kinds of materials and techniques, we realized that the only way we could accomplish this was by very careful editing, by storyboarding the sequence in such a way that not all the seven mummies are seen disintegrating but just a few in order to suggest that they are all turning to dust. So we worked out different close-up shots which we could manage."

In one instance, the tallest of the mummies

(continued on page 72)

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Dick Miller

(Continued from page 49)

think, goes off to some little slumber party, but really she's going to a rock 'n' roll orgy. And I'm there in a sweater, smoking pipes, wearing loafers and watering the lawn," he laughs, "that's the character." When it came time to make *Gremlins*, Miller was asked for a suggestion for who should play Mrs. Futterman. He says, "I thought it'd be fun if Jackie Joseph and I were together again, and they said, 'Marvelous idea.'"

Miller assures us that *Gremlins* is going to have some scary scenes so you can count on seeing more Fango coverage of the picture in the future.

Apparently keeping busy lately, Miller still keeps a hand in independent productions. For his long-time associate Roger Corman, he will be appearing in the science fiction film *Space Raiders*. In classic Miller style, he will be playing Crazy Mel the used-spaceship salesman. "Mel dresses in polyester," Miller says, "really crummy clothes, but he wears a space helmet, and he sells used rockets to the whole universe through a fast-pitch hologram." I ask if *Space Raiders* is going to be tongue-in-cheek. He answers, "It's kind of tongue-in-cheek. It looks like Roger's—I wouldn't say rip-off—it's Roger's *tribute* to *E.T.* Instead of a little creature being lost and wanting to go home, he has a young boy who keeps saying, "I wanna go home! *I wanna go home!*" He adds with a chuckle, "If it's not meant to be done for laughs, I don't know what."

Is working on a Corman movie today as much fun as when Miller was acting in such films as *It Conquered the World* in the 50's? "Well, no," says Miller. "It's a different set-up; Roger's not around on the set. Everyone on *Space Raiders* is young and I would imagine gifted and they're all very enthusiastic, but the word you used was fun and that was something. . .maybe I've grown too old, but that doesn't seem to be there. They're very interested in their work as filmmakers, but I guess you can't bring back the old days. I forget that I'm talking about 25 years ago when we jumped into this, and things were different. They've got better schedules now; when they make a cheap picture today they're still not shooting in as little as five to 10 days. So that adventurous, pioneering aspect of filmmaking is gone. I imagine the people who made films in the 20's and 30's would say the same thing to me; you know, I'd start talking about making films, they'd say 'Git outa here! You're crazy! You should of been around *then!*'"

In coming months Miller can also be seen in an independent, Hitchcock-style horror film called *Lies* and the Goldie Hawn movie *Swing Shift*, directed by Corman protege Jonathan Demme. Like *Twilight Zone* and *Gremlins*, the Demme picture is a Warner Bros. production, which means that Miller will be appearing in three major studio projects within the next year, a development with which he is understandably pleased. He compares his acting career in the 50's, when he had leading parts in small pictures, to his current phase in which he has small parts in big films, and he finds something good in both stages of his career. Of old pictures like *Carnival Rock* and *Bucket of Blood*, he says, "The times have not treated the things I did 25 years ago badly. They're cult films and they've given me a certain notoriety." As for his recent work, he says, "If the scene, such as in *Twilight Zone*, really pays off, it doesn't matter that you only worked on the picture for one day. If the scene really pays off, then you're happy. *The Howling*, for example, was a one-day job too, with, I think, spectacular results for me. Everybody talks about that scene. I'm delighted when someone comes up to me and says they saw a good picture like *The Howling* and they say, 'You came on and it was one of the best moments in the picture.' If I can get more pictures like that, more moments like that, I'm really happy. I don't know that Mr. Futterman is going to make the highlights of *Gremlins* or that Walter Paisley is going to be the highlight of *Twilight Zone*, but they're good scenes."

Getting down to the real issue at hand, I ask Miller how he would compare working on two Spielberg movies in the same year with getting his name in FANGORIA. He replies quickly, "Nothing, Dave, compares with getting my name in FANGORIA. I would give up the free trip on the Titanic I'm going to take to get into FANGORIA."

And it takes a heck of a guy to tell you that.

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Dick Smith

(Continued from Page 70)

staggers back against a pillar and slumps into a squatting position; he then keels over. A close-up was then set up for a dummy head of the lover fixed onto the end of a stick. When the head hits the floor, its highly fragile material breaks up. The most difficult task in this sequence occurs when a male and female mummy collapse in a corner. Once the actors had reached a final, predetermined position, casts were made of the actors and dummy duplicates were made. These statues were rigged so that the man's head (worked by piston) dropped down into his own chest, and both the face and chest then crumbled as the legs fell to pieces.

Smith points out that this work was "enormous because the fragile material we used had to be cast in very special flexible molds. Not only did we use a flexible mold, but we used two flexible layers in order to be able to demold this fragile material without breaking it."

Making this fragile material demanded a great deal of ingenuity. What was needed was a thin surface material that would take to the fine wrinkled detail of the mummy suits, and a spongy substance to fill in the interior of the figures. The surface material was made by melting a very brittle wax and adding micro balloons. Micro balloons, Smith explains, are a substance "that looks like dust but is in fact tiny glass hollow spheres, so that, in a sense, when you mix micro balloons in you are incorporating little air bubbles coated with glass. Because it is made of glass, things don't stick to it terribly well and that helped to make the wax even more fragile. Plus, the wax also had baking soda in it and, as it was melted, vinegar was added; this caused the baking soda to give off gas and it made the wax spongy. Nevertheless when it was brushed into the mold it would get a good impression on the outside while it tended to be very fragile."

The source for the inner filler was ironic in that it was a type of polyurethane foam which was considered a failure by its inventor. "It was supposed to be strong," says Smith, "but something was wrong with it. It suited our purposes though, and we were able to have a number of gallons formulated for our use. When we incorporated micro balloons into it we were able to produce this very spongy, lightweight, crumbling material."

Smith is now engineering some old-age makeups for the film adaptation of the Broadway hit *Amadeus*. In between the rigorous effects of *The Hunger* and this current, relatively lightweight assignment Smith says that the only project he's been working on is "cleaning up the basement." He has been turning down some minor jobs lately because he'd rather keep his spare time than take on something he's not particularly excited by. As the acknowledged makeup master he can afford to pick and choose. Hopefully, he's holding out for the offer that can be parlayed into another FANGORIA cover story.

Outside Hollywood
Afterthoughts by the Editor

Neapolitan gore in *Pieces*. This, and Mexican wrestling movies, are what I call *cult*!

Let's say you're in a Walden's bookstore, or at your local newsstand, just browsing . . . As your eyes pore over the magazines that stand in a tattered formation, like Lee's troops at Appomatox, you think to yourself what a sorry state the magazine industry has fallen into. Sometimes it seems that, unless you're addicted to free phone sex or own a home computer, tehre's *nothing* worth reading . . .

I've had that feeling, too. It's a feeling I've tried to keep in mind during the five years* that I've served as editor of *Fangoria* magazine, and I've done my best to see at least *one* magazine on the racks that shows some signs of life between its covers.

Not that Fango is the antidote to everyone's case of newsstand boredom—the attempt to please *everyone* is one of the root causes of the terminal blandness in mass-market enterprises. Books aren't considered profitmakers unless they're best sellers; TV shows don't make a second season unless they're viewed by one fourth or more of our population; rock video is homogenizing the trends in popular music as never before.

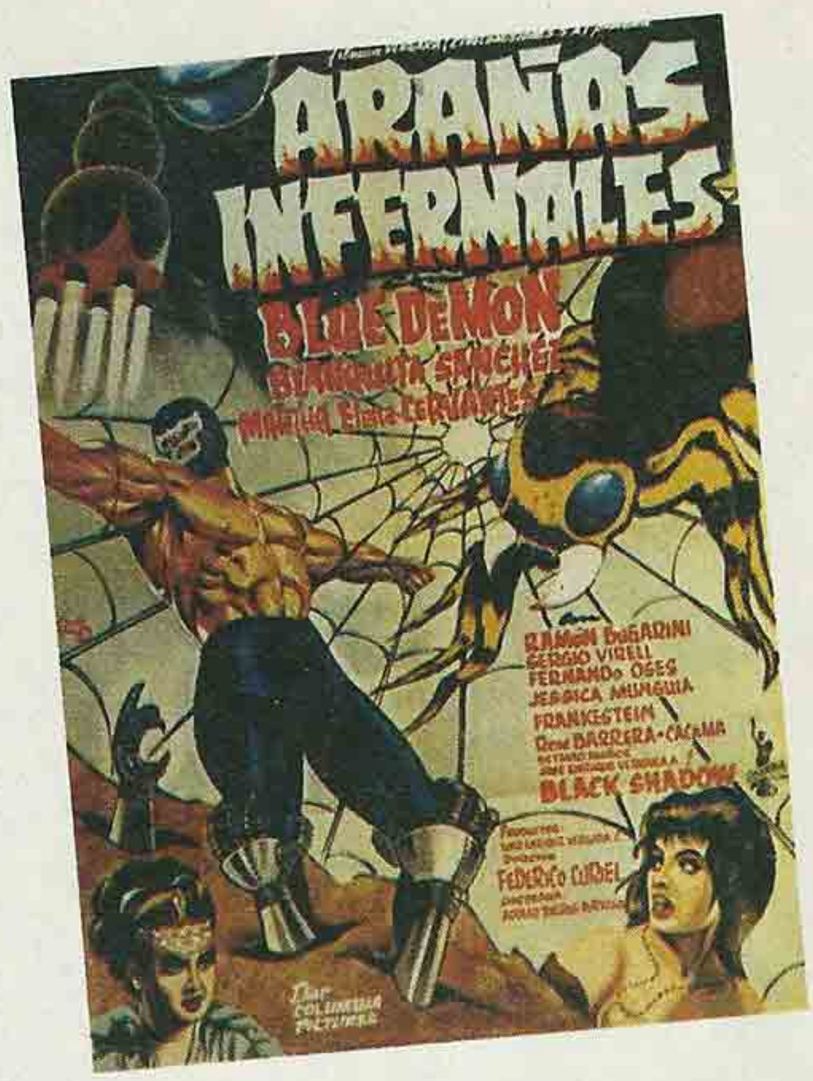
In Hollywood, films are now so costly to make that a hefty percentage of the populace must plunk down their dollars at the boxoffice for a "medium budget" film to make a profit. In a perfect world, the obstacles to mass-market success would serve as a further motivation to excellence. In reality, what most often results is creativity-by-committee; the defeat of originality and independent vision.

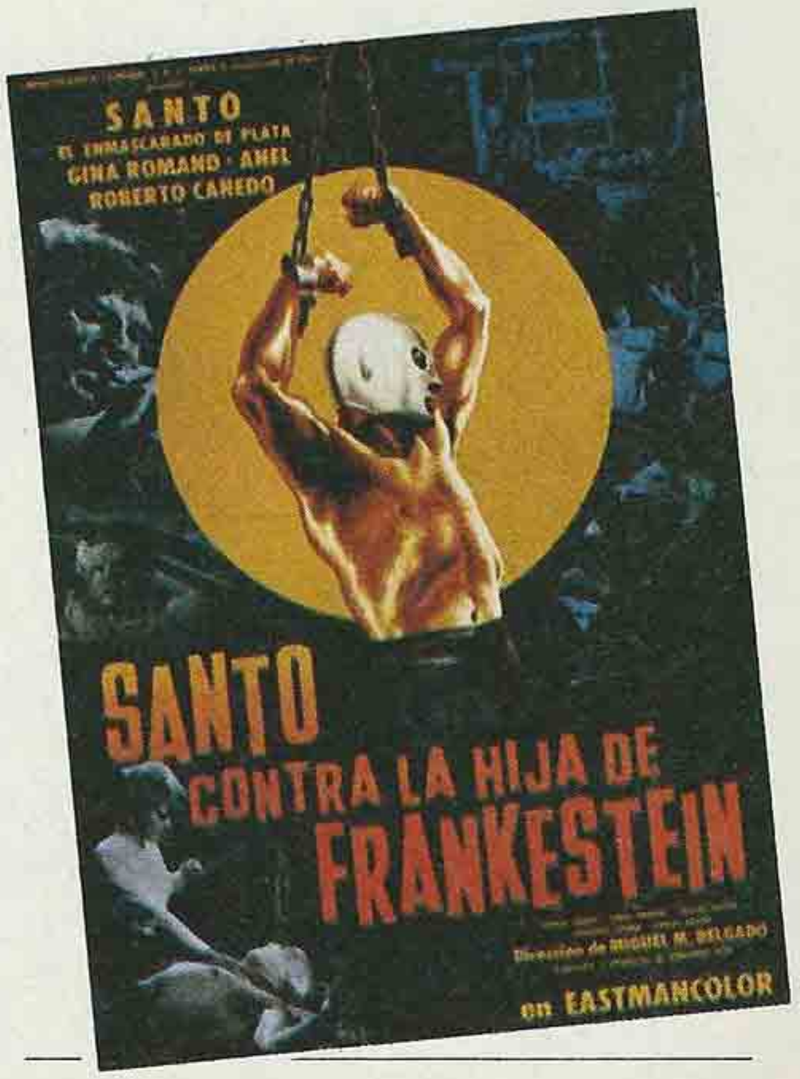
But Hollywood is not the only place where films are made. The alternative to *Flashdance* and the umpteenth *Star Wars* are the low-budget independent productions emanating from such exotic locales as Baltimore, Detroit, Austin and Pittsburgh.

When I first heard the term "cult movie," it was an elitist concept referring to films "too good" to be appreciated by a wide audience—the *Children of Paradise* syndrome. Around the same time that *Fangoria* was launched, the brothers Medved expanded the cult concept to include films "too lousy" to appeal to the masses—the Ed Wood complex. Most recently, Danny Peary has produced two volumes on the subject—imaginatively titled *Cult Movies* and *Cult Movies 2*. Though both volumes are commendable for the information they contain, they are also redolent with the stale air of a film school education; almost as bad, Peary redefines the term "cult movie" as any film that remains beloved by its public after release, allowing him to pad his books with such over-exposed mainstream successes as *The Wizard of Oz* (though he neglects the obvious choice by his own definition; no *Star Wars!*). This dilution of the concept, of couse, paves the way for *Cult Movies 3, 4, 5, 6 ad infinitum*.

For myself, a cult film is one that was clearly not intended to please the mass audience, and yet succeeds admirably at entertaining the few that keep its memory alive. Films like *Halloween, Texas Chainsaw Massacre, Basket Case* and *Evil Dead* aren't just good horror movies—they're what keep independent filmmaking alive.

R.H. Martin
Serious Film Journalist





Overleaf: Cult queen Elvira wishes our readers the Sweetest of Nightmares.

*For two of those years, I've had the pleasure & privilege of sharing that editorship with David Everitt, bestselling co-author of *Film Tricks, The Manly Handbook,* and *The Not A-Team Beauty Book;* also known as "the Dean of Long Island Western Writers" for such epics as *Raven Bravo* and *Cheyenne Gauntlet*.

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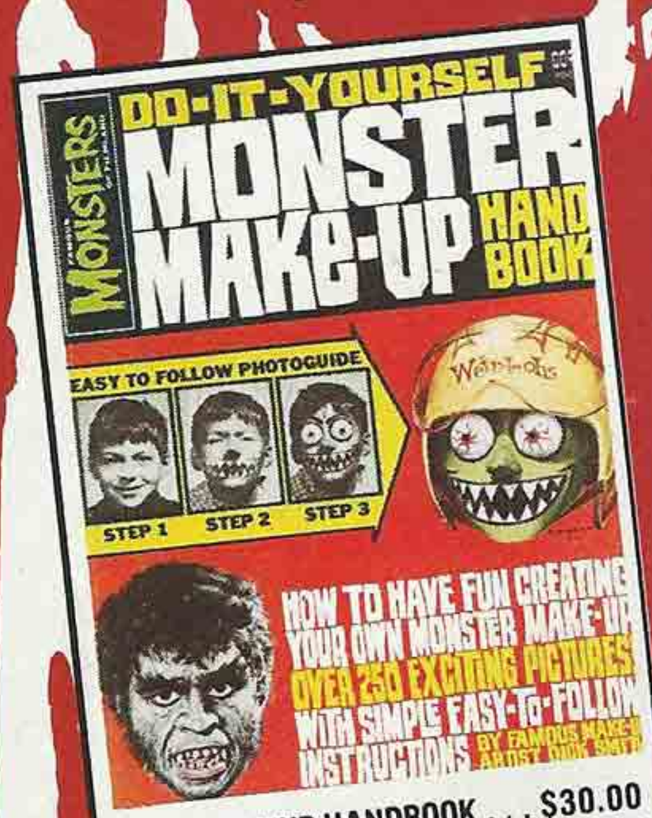

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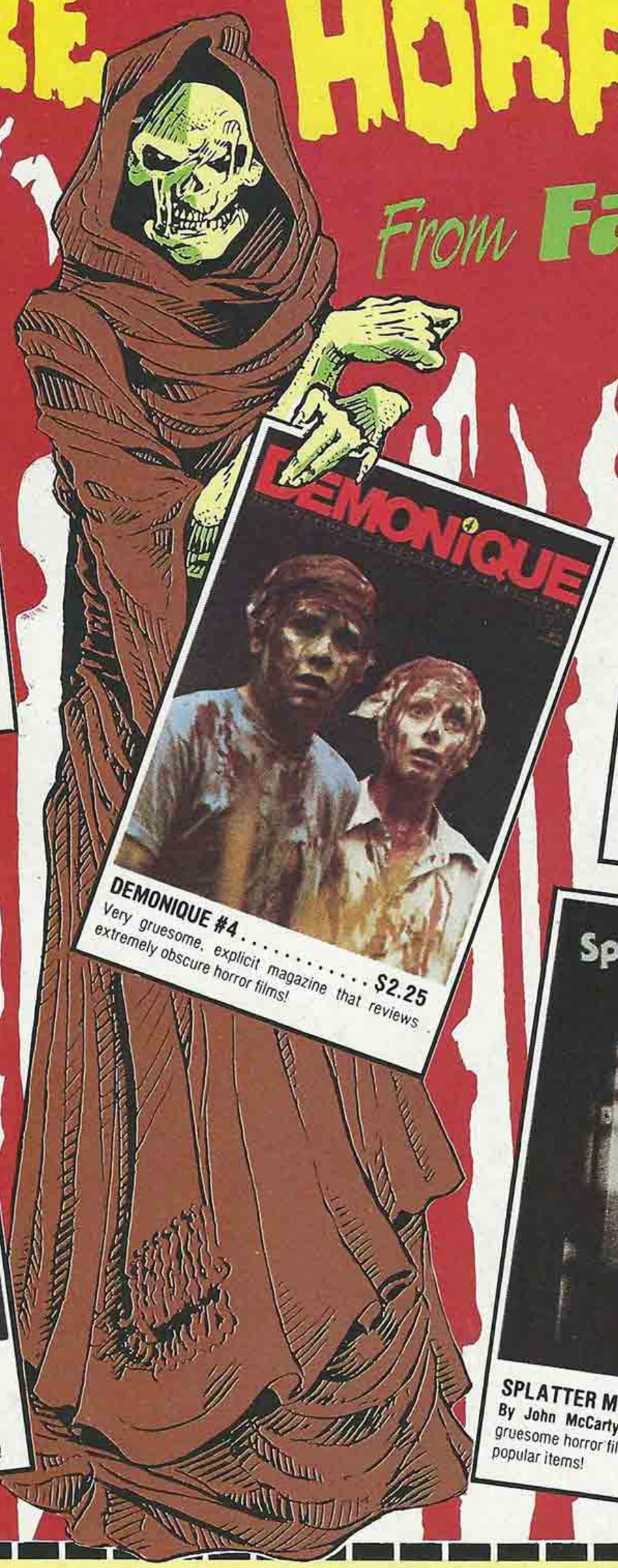

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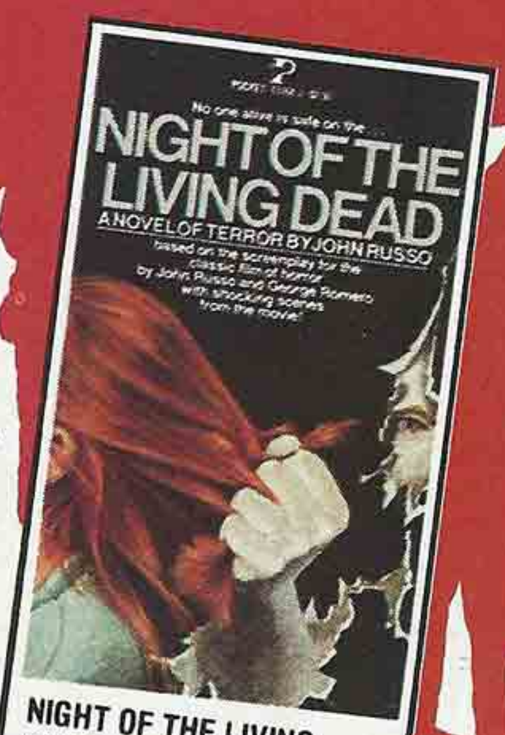

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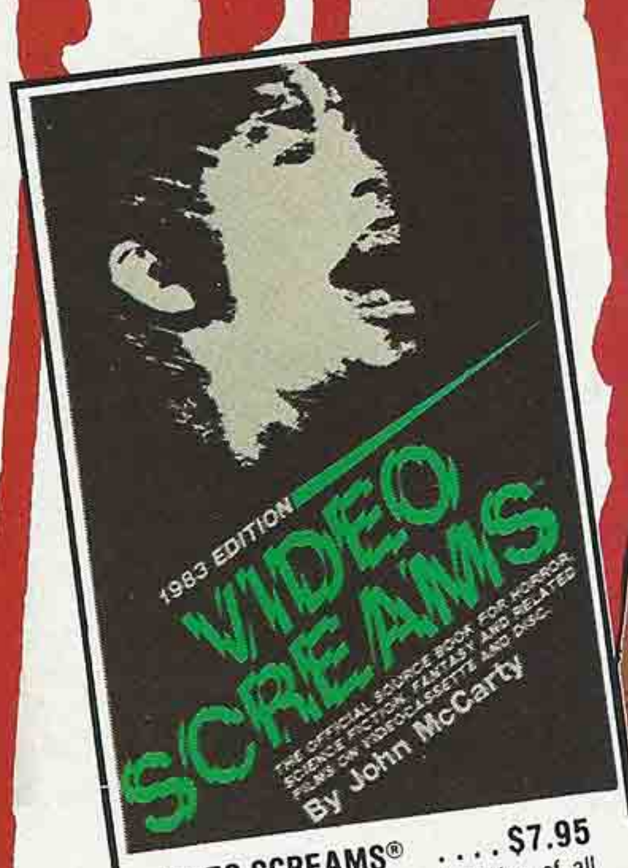

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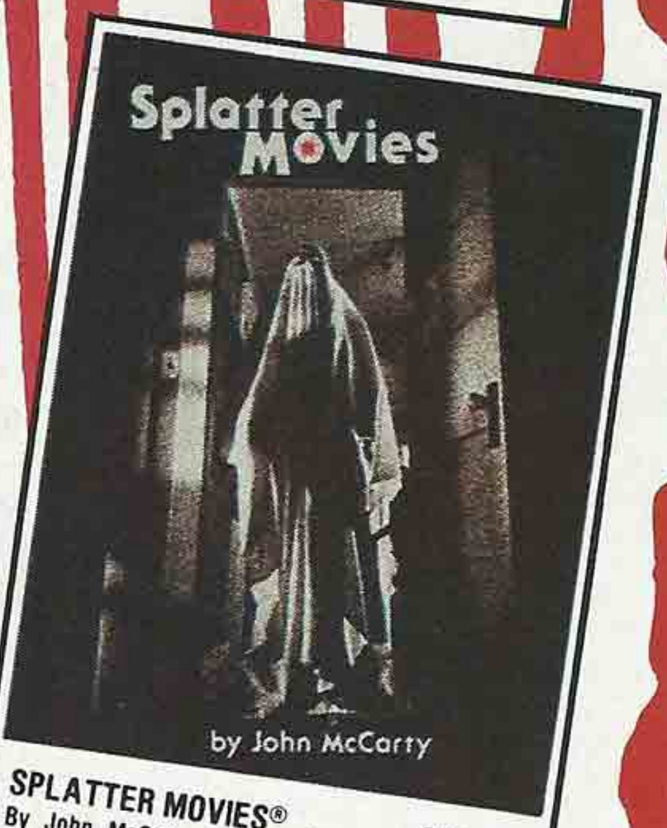

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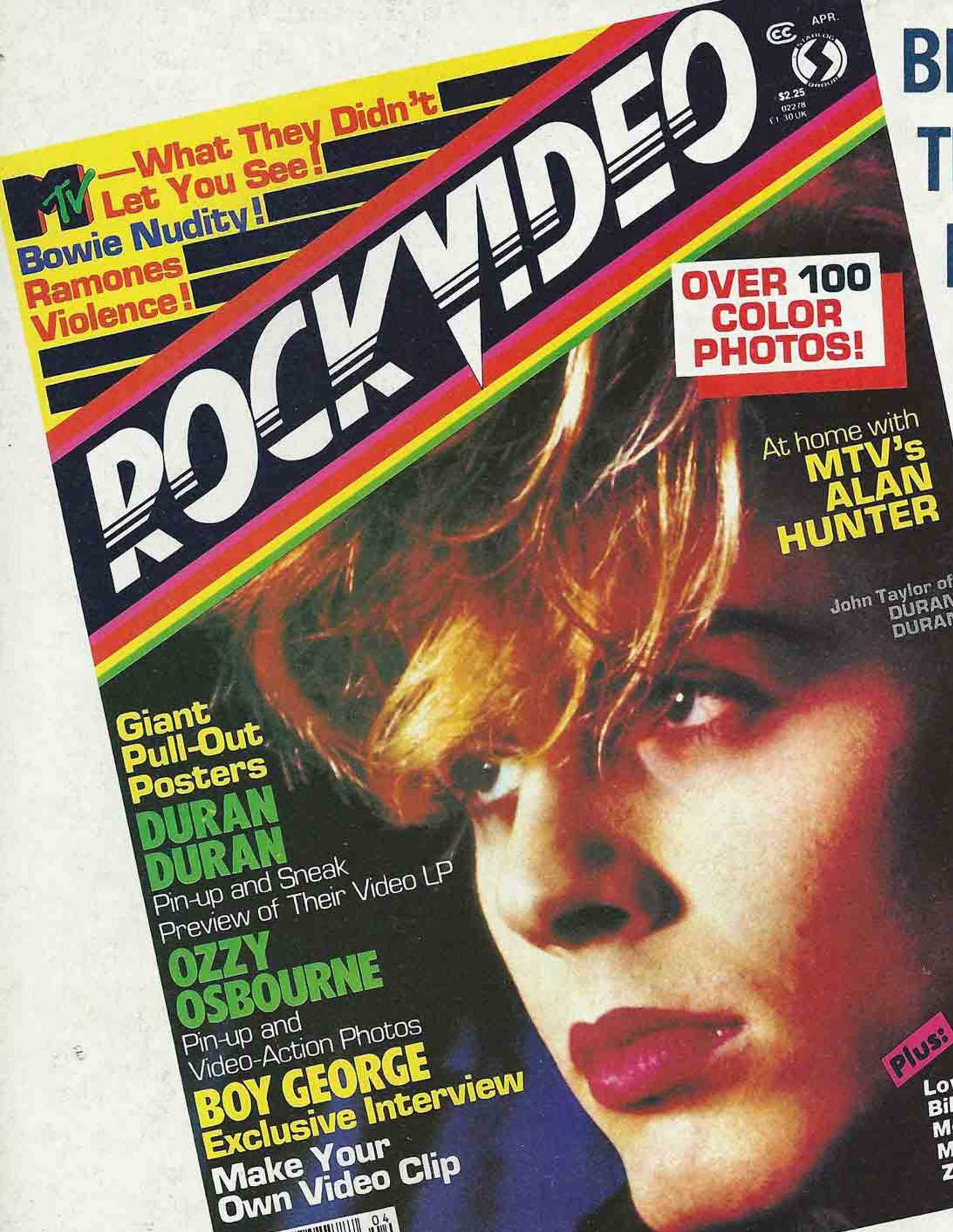

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